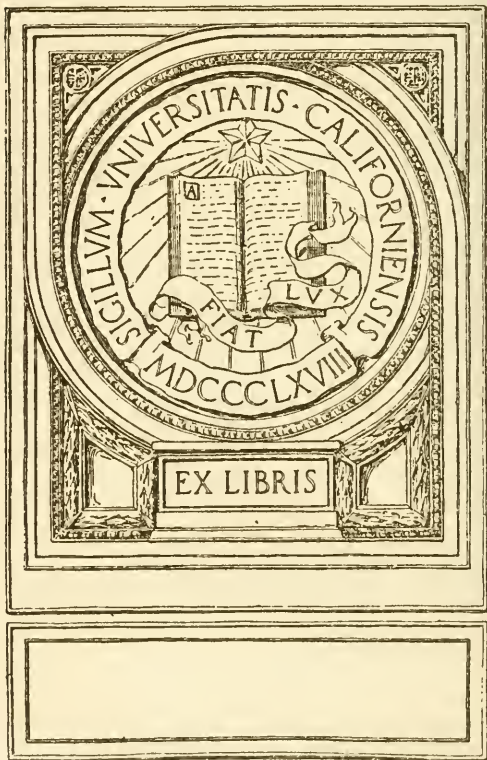


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# IMMORTAL ITALY

*By* EDGAR ANSEL MOWRER



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TO THOSE ITALIANS, OF WHATEVER  
BREED OR PARTY, WHO, AMID THE  
INTOLERANCE OF HALF A WORLD,  
HAVE YET SUCCEEDED IN KEEPING  
THEIR COUNTRY AN OASIS OF SO  
CIAL AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM,  
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED



## FOREWORD

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In this modern world of heightened fanaticism, sincerity is particularly unwelcome. For in all human affairs sincerity discovers imperfection and applies criticism. To many Italians my criticism of modern Italy may seem unwarrantedly severe. I can only answer that had I been writing of other countries, and among them my own, my criticism, though applied elsewhere in the national life, would not have been less severe. And criticism after all, if it be founded, is only a form of diagnosis, and an essential prelude to rational cure. To be successful diagnosis must be made with affection. Despite—rather because—of my criticism, I am fond of Italy and the Italians.

It is my desire and privilege here to thank all those persons without whom this volume could never have been written; and chiefly Victor F. Lawson, editor and publisher of the Chicago Daily News, in whose service most of the matter contained here was gathered; Thomas Nelson Page, former American Ambassador at Rome, who stood by me when I needed support; Ilda Roero di Cortanze, who first introduced me to her countrymen; Giuseppe Prezzolini, shrewdest of critics, and Maffio Maffii, most indulgent of friends.

ROME

EDGAR A. MOWRER





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# IMMORTAL ITALY

## CHAPTER I

### WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

Before everything else, Italy is old. It is saturated with history and still a little tired with having twice carried the burden of occidental civilization. The air is heavy with the dust of too much life. For nearly 3000 years men have lived continuously on the seven hills we call Rome and during most of this period Rome has been a city unlike others, more important than they, a center of power, riches, art, and nearly everything that men have most sought.

In consequence, even in their present dimmed glory Italians are closer to the thing called civilization than any other white man. There is no pure Latin race, but there is a Latin tradition still active which stands essentially for civilized living, with its virtues and defects. The new Italian sap rising vigorously in the country to-day runs perforce in the old trunk. But Italians may not, because of this young energy, be classed with crude, truly youthful peoples. However low they may fall they can never become barbarians. Their vices like their museums are those of highly civilized men, worn with much living, old.

The history of Italy, of twice conquering, uncon-

## IMMORTAL ITALY

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querable Rome, of the hundred jeweled cities of the Middle Ages, of the mighty men of the Renaissance, epitomizes that of Europe. Egypt, Assyria, Greece represented moments in human achievement. France, Spain, Holland, England, Germany, however productive of human values, have remained national, each with a nation's ephemeral radiance, and sure mortality. But Italy is different, national, yet something more, broader in spirit, apparently undying. Though the last centuries had seemed to mark a definite decline, the unexpected awakening during the lifetime of still living men refuted appearances. Italy is old and new at the same time. It will thrill the world again some day, and then its universal spirit—so broadly human compared with the petty nationalism of other countries—will be the more powerful to save because Italians carry in their blood the aspirations and failures of the entire Christian era.

Let the ignorant laugh. No one would deny that for the last three centuries the centers of human achievement have been elsewhere. Northern Europe and America rule the world; their cities are full of a modern energy, a bustling mechanical production, a restless curiosity and courage that have, for the time being, taken them beyond the shiftless sleepy countries of the Mediterranean.

How can one familiar with the United States, with Great Britain, with Germany, found hopes on a moribund land of beggars and museums? Is it not a still greater marvel that, after 3000 years of pre-eminence, Italy is still alive, that it has kept its personality and reforged its nationality, that a renewed

nation with its soil still heavy with coma should be breathing in what superficial foreigners had taught us to consider a graveyard? A country that can twice arise from the sleep that is brother to death deserves the epithet immortal. In the Italian power to come back is matter for comparison which might make the enthusiast of modernity a little skeptical. What is there in the Italian type of life, the Italian mode of thought, which has saved the country from the oblivion of Egypt, the ignominy of Byzantine Greece, the sullen somnolence of Spain? It needs investigation. Italy makes its appeal to many kinds of men. If you have forgotten that man is only man down the ages and not in any one place or moment, study Italy. If you have estimated beyond the just value the modern period of mechanics, or have grown foolishly proud of your own country and its intangible institutions, remember Italy. And most of all, if you have been hungry for light as you worked in gloomy streets under sodden skies in the cities of King Coal, or grown frantic at the unrelieved ugliness of commercial and improvised centers of life, visit Italy. For to see Italy with the eyes of the understanding is to perceive why God, looking on his work, saw that it was good.

“Rome was not built in a day.” But Chicago was, and Berlin was, and Liverpool was, and even London was largely reconstructed in the days of Queen Victoria, and looks it. Already the New York of a generation ago is disappearing to make room for new constructions. Churches pronounced marvels (hyperbolically, of course) are replaced by the temples of Big Business, bigger and better than ever.

At Rome the stock exchange is housed behind the grave Corinthian columns of Neptune's Temple. That is the difference. In the cities of progress everything is rebuilt within the life of man. Onward and upward! Youth and efficiency and the will to power! Vim, vigor, victory, throw away your hammer and get a horn and blow, brother, blow! "I remember," cries the ecstatic octogenarian, "when cows grazed over what is now the center of the city of Chicago." Don't worry, grandfather, they will again graze there. Is there anything in our American cities that was intended to last? Our present skyscrapers will have been constructed many times before the sites are abandoned, but it may well be that when Rome means no more than Nineveh, the Colosseum will stand indomitable in the Campagna and the temples of Pæstum still testify to Doric taste when an Asiatic or African flag waves over Europe. That is the difference. On one side change, boundless, largely aimless activity, faith and unlimited self-esteem; on the other stability, contemplation, skepticism and enduring monuments. As for Progress, that elusive lady we would all make ours, if she marry at all it is with Mankind; at the single nations she only laughs.

Life must be work and worry as well as enjoyment and meditation. Surely; we may not all live in Italy, but we can at least visit that land. Then he who brings nothing but curiosity or contempt shall go away as empty as he came, swearing that here is nothing that need appeal to the giants of the modern world. But to him who comes with sympathy, hu-

mility and imagination, all things shall be given.

By a normal pressure of elimination only fine old things have survived in Italy and compared with the creations of the moderns they seem the work of supermen. They are, they represent the sifting of centuries. It is no wonder that most Italians, drawing the comparison, foolishly respect all that is old, even to the extent of intrusting their government to old men, or that independent Italian youth revolts violently against the oppressively ancient, whether in art, thought, custom, business or agricultural methods. Twenty centuries of greatness weigh heavily on modern shoulders and in matter of technic we may sometimes admit there has been improvement. For us, who can enjoy them as a human heritage and do not have to live with them, each ancient custom or costume, each mossy stone may be a source of undiluted pleasure. I remember my joy when an old fisherman at Capri explained away the swelter of an August day on the ground that it was the "heat of the Lion." He had never heard of the Zodiac.

It is annoying to Romans when foreigners suggest that all the houses along the Corso, or principal street, might profitably be torn down to make room for interesting archæological excavations, but there is much to be said for both sides.

At Naples, amid streets overflowing with street cars, automobiles and pedestrians, I saw garbage thrown in a heap on the front steps of a large modern apartment building. Later a man drove a flock of twenty goats through the traffic to those same



steps and while he milked the goats they ate the garbage. The system is not general and surely not sanitary, but it pleased me. In much of Southern Italy these goats are a perfect pest, devouring all vegetation and small household objects within reach and even climbing into young trees and eating the tops. It annoys the inhabitants but I enjoy it; they are not my trees and the sight of a pensive nanny perched in a tiny tree overhanging a five-hundred-foot drop is inspiring. Foreigners can afford to be tolerant. Certain journalists have recently cried out against a phenomenon of hysteria in a Tuscan forest: an entire village has emptied itself among the near-by trees, the ecstatic villagers certain that they have seen the Madonna. Well, maybe they have, you may answer, and no harm in it.

But these are details. The charm, the beauty, the significance of Italy—and thoughtful Italians must admit it—lie in its age; not exclusively in what is old, but in the coexistence in the same physical space and time of objects, ideas and customs most of which are fine, dating from many different social moments. Paganism, embodied in such beliefs as that of the evil eye, the finger-guessing game called *mora*, and the excessive growth permitted the nails of the little fingers, there is in plenty. Catholicism is represented in its every phase, from the stubborn innocence of the origins to the Pontifical might of Gregory, the goodness of Saint Francis, the mysticism of Saint Catherine, the reaction of the Council of Trent, the implacable zeal of the Society of Jesus, the indifferent belief of most contemporary Italians.



Protestantism has indeed few representatives in the past, they having been consigned to fire and sword, but of philosophical and scientific heresy there is plenty and the names of Bruno and Galileo are there to prove it. Modern science is well represented by living men, modern philosophy by Benedetto Croce (among others), who lives in the shadow of Vesuvius.

Age alone would not account for the fascination of it all. Transported to Lapland most of the charm would be swallowed by the cold. Mere temperature means much, and in vain the misty gods of Ireland, the monstrous deities of Germany and Scandinavia, have sought to compete with those of Greece and Rome. For this is the truly temperate climate, warm enough to loosen the emotions, cold enough to check the gushing of the tropics. Here life is truly human. Not all of Italy, of course, is always pleasant to live in. In the North, the winter rains recall the intense disagreeable wetness of the Low Countries or Ireland; in the South, a flaming pitiless sun for five months scorches animal and plant. But in general, heat and cold are tempered, the air is clear and vision is far-reaching, while in the sky floats a real and visible sun and not the flat red disk that swings over London.

In its nature, Italy is uniformly beautiful and endlessly varied. Here is nearly every type of scenery imaginable, from the peaks of the Alps and crags of the Appenines to marshes like those of Louisiana. The scenery, less majestic than that of America, is superior in the perfection of natural form and in embellishment by man. Unlike Ameri-

can towns, Italian cities harmonize with their surroundings and nothing is more natural than the way the hills of Central Italy blossom into villages on the top.

Time has softened everything, rounded down the roughness, smoothed away the angles and the strident contrasts. There is no doubt of it, and not all the cry about the new beauty can change it; mere age is æsthetically an important factor, and a hill, a church, a view are more beautiful not when they are new, but when they are old and familiar. Somehow they have grown closer to the heart.

Pervading the entire peninsula is a common Italian personality, but even more typical of Italy is the richness of local character. Nature and climate are not more varied than the people. Roughly, there is a general cleavage between North and South and we must never forget that we are dealing with a country "where two stages of civilization coexist in the same State." Between a Lombard and a Sicilian, a Piedmontese and a Pugliese, there is an abyss that fifty years of national unity have hardly begun to bridge. Piedmontese and Lombards are among the most modern of men. The Genoese is a modern merchant with something of the old Levantine trader about him. Southern Italians almost without exception exhibit some oriental characteristics. Even in the Center, the home of all that is left of the old Italic races, there are differences between the skeptical, sarcastic Tuscan, the gentle Umbrian from Assisi or Perugia, the passionate, primitive mountaineer of the Abruzzo and the proud, lazy, savage Roman of the Campagna or the Alban Hills. Phy-

sically, in Italy one sees all the types of white humanity, and blue eyes and light brown or red hair are commoner than one would think, not only in the North, where German blood runs in many veins, but in Sicily.

Wonderful and rare are the cities. Turin, with its broad streets and square plan, is a modern industrial center, the home of the old Piedmontese aristocracy and the new radicals, yet intellectually as dull as dust. Milan, however, is a splendid up-to-date town, the first in Italy in business, industry, intellectual life, music, with the best theaters, an enterprising population and a good municipal administration. No other town can dispute its claim to be the nation's "moral capital." The cities of Venetia are beautiful, old-fashioned places with comfortable houses and an air of solid prosperity. Venice is, of course, unique.

Bologna, the real capital of Romagna (though actually situated in the artificially created Emilia), has all the charm of ancient and modern. It is the center of the Perpetual Opposition. Now ultra communist, it would, were the Socialists to triumph, soon pass to a more radical attitude, anarchy or absolutism. The Bolognese, a handsome race, are a much needed element of ferment among a people who are, despite appearances, far too indifferent and meek.

Florence, Siena, Pisa, Lucca are, alas, cities of the past and with the exception of the first, have value only for the art lover and historian. The modern Tuscan can better be studied in the unspoiled inhabitants of the towns neglected by tourists.

One might continue indefinitely such a summary description of Italian cities. There are the semi-Swiss towns of the Italian lakes, the tropical winter resorts of the Riviera, the quaint, hilltop villages of Tuscany, Umbria, the Abruzzo, Latium and Campania; there is depraved, siren-calling Naples, the poverty-stricken and charming towns of the extreme South, the semi-oriental villages of Sicily and the Puglie.

The point is that there are not two cities alike and an uninteresting town is rare. There is hardly a common language. Spoken Tuscan constitutes official and literary Italian and a foreigner familiar with it can be understood wherever he goes. Most of the dialects resemble it. But I defy the foreign professor of Italian to comprehend without previous experience the Piedmontese or Sardinian dialects, while the speech of Bolognese, Genoese and some Sicilians is flatly unintelligible to educated Italians from other parts. Names of common objects and foods change bewilderingly from place to place, and within a two-mile circle around the town of Amalfi the word for wine is pronounced in three different ways.

As with language, so with social customs, art and architecture. Between the habits of the Piedmontese, the so-called Prussians of Italy, and the semi-oriental Sicilians, there would seem to be no resemblance. Not illogically a skillful blending of Piedmontese firmness and Sicilian and Sardinian dash produced during the war some of the finest brigades. In the North social customs are like those of France.

## WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

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In the South women are still commonly kept in what amounts to oriental sexual tutelage.

The various schools of art and architecture which have existed contemporaneously in this single country have left a permanent stamp and created a marvelous tradition. Nothing could be more unlike than the appearance of Turin, Florence, Naples, Palermo, yet all are somehow Italian. Every district, often every village, has its own music, its special folk songs, its preferences. The popular music of Naples has conquered the world but it is, in my opinion, far less valuable, passionate and original than that of Sicily or Sardinia.

To this day poverty-stricken Italy is, in the variety of its human types, customs, cities, arts, architecture, music, the richest country in the world. Despite the efforts of small-minded statesmen it has so far defied the passion for uniformity that is little by little destroying the æsthetic values of modern life.

Economically, one cannot repeat it too often, Italy is poor and overpopulated. The inhabitants of many a cold, wet city go all winter without a fire to warm them. Travel in the cold season is a disagreeable business. On the floors of the poorer dwellings and of nearly all public buildings and offices, carpets are unknown. Plumbing is old-fashioned or absent, soap and water are sparingly used, sanitation is rudimentary, life is hard. Food is simple and never too plentiful. The creature comforts of modern life as lived elsewhere do not generally exist. Yet even on the material side life in Italy offers a certain kind of richness other countries do



not show. It is a richness of material, of art works, of tradition.

First, of material. Italians go cold in winter because there is no native coal and little wood. But they build their houses of solid plaster and stone, because of stone there is only too much. Not common stone, but valuable and semiprecious stone as well. The outside of a building may be vulgar tufa, travertine, peperino, limestone or lava, but the decorations are nearly always of marble or, maybe, granite. Hardly a tenement but has its staircase of white Carrara marble. It abounds. It is flattened into window sills and slabs for public comfort stations. It is still burnt for plaster as the early Christians destroyed Pagan statues to make mortar.

And not only white marble—colored as well. The gutters of Verona are hewn from blocks of pinkish stone, a kind of marble. I know a man who went to Verona just to sit for a moment in a marble gutter. Black African marble is not rare; strange oriental marbles brought to Italy ages ago by Roman conquerors are not difficult to obtain. Porphyry is common, alabaster cheap. There is abundance of malachite and lapis lazuli. The indestructible stone decorations of ancient Roman luxury have, where not destroyed by the Christians, survived, mostly in the churches where very often priceless altars of colored stones are placed side by side with gaudily painted plaster and covered with wonderful gilt, papier-maché, tin and tissue-paper dolls. In Rome the tenements are built of finer, more enduring, material than American houses of the rich.

Not all the apparent richness of Italian life is

mere stuff. Even more is it latent in form. Italians naturally demand a decorated existence on the material side. Rich and poor alike fill their houses with ornaments. The taste of these ornaments is often questionable. They may include old tapestries, Cinquecento paintings and bronzes by Donatello, or God-bless-our-home mottoes, magazine covers and lithographs, and plaster casts of abominable sentimentality. Modern Italian taste is no better than that of other countries. But there must be decoration on everything, even though it spoil what little talent is still evinced by their modern sculpture. Something of the æsthetic mediocrity of a people in whom the creative faculty has disappeared while the decorative mania has survived is redeemed by the enormous amount of statues, furniture, utensils and art works produced during the nation's heyday, part of which have remained. Modern Italian art is mediocre though hardly worse than the art of other countries. Italian furniture (except where mere reproduction of older models) is poor in design and flimsy. But you can, and any number of Italians do, furnish a house cheaply with old paintings, Roman or Greek objects from excavations, antique furniture. Even when there is no taste in the present generation, inherited objects prevent utter ugliness. Old apartments with walls and ceiling aflame with the frescoes of another age are common in every city and may be rented at a comparatively low figure. Though rarely of first rank, these paintings are almost never bad and their presence lends to the enormous, high-ceiled rooms in the massive, old buildings a charm and value beyond the power of

open plumbing, vacuum cleaning and steam heating to equal.

A third element in Italian riches can be traced to tradition and customs. Poverty and riches are, after all, economic facts over which any amount of good taste and artistic desire may stumble, but the manner of spending what surplus exists is largely governed by human fancy in the form of social tradition. Americans will be comfortable, decently clothed and well fed, even at the cost of giving up all luxuries and small pleasures. Not so the Italians. They will put up with any amount of discomfort, are careless about clothing to the point of shabbiness, and limit their eating to the bare quantities of bread, soup and macaroni necessary to sustain the vital energy. But they ask large and imposing houses, reasonably well constructed and of durable material. It would hardly occur to architects and contractors nurtured in the Italian tradition to provide any others. They are careless as to cleanliness and hygiene, indifferent to sociological schemes; they prefer that the public money be invested in imposing statues to the national greatness. Any pretext for a statue will do, and the result is a people in marble and bronze, largely portraits, erected to the memory of important deeds or of great men (and more rarely great women) whose fame has hardly surpassed the city walls. The large town of Bari with 120,000 inhabitants does not possess a hospital, but the townsmen gladly raised the funds for a mammoth equestrian statue in bronze to that dullest of kings, Humbert.

Uninspired as most of these statues are, col-



lectively they give to a city a rich and civilized appearance. Moreover, Italians, however poor, never quite give up the movie, the theater, the opera and the concert hall. They visit art museums. And their chief personal indulgence is jewelry. Men and women alike adorn their hands with manifold rings; the men, in addition, affect heavy gold watch chains, the women bracelets massive as handcuffs; watch chains and bracelets are invariably loaded with half a dozen small ornaments and charms, among them the inevitable gold or coral horn to keep off the evil eye. Very rich people and peasants add necklaces, brooches, pins, earrings, elaborately jeweled combs and nicknacks without end. The custom may be criticized but the effect of this display is to enrich life.

But more than on inanimate decoration, the richness of Italian life depends on the fine features and straight attractive bodies of its men and women. To associate long with Italians is to raise one's standards of personal beauty. There are exceptionally beautiful persons in all countries, but one comes here to know that what one admired in men and women of other countries was generally nobility or charm of expression, robustness of muscular structure, visible character. Italians, take them by and large, are handsome in their own right and so far as I know there is no race to compete with them. They are healthy and strong as well, and if smaller than some northern races, are very resisting. The human beings you pass in the streets are fine physical specimens. Of course, there are too many men with the stamp of the primitive clay and too many women,

“their beautiful faces as yet unmarred by thought.” But it is easy for plain or ugly races to attempt to reduce beauty to visible strength of character or nobility of expression. The ancient Greeks, our superiors in these matters, knew better, and we shall not go far toward producing physically beautiful human beings until we admit that, in some mysterious manner, the body is a projection of the soul. It is my belief that the handsome proportions and good looks of the Italians are the reflection of an inner harmony, an ancient secret of living that has become manifest in flesh and bone.

It is the fashion in these equalitarian days to despise ostentatious wealth. Riches, say our moralizing economists, are justified in two ways: they permit private charity and the endowment of public institutions, libraries and hospitals which the public is too selfish to provide for itself; and, in the form of increased investment, they make for greater production. Conclusions of a prosaic world! In Italy men still affirm without shame that the chief use of wealth is to give a splendid glamour to life. Every one (except a few saints) is interested in riches so employed—in sheer external splendor and luxury, I mean, divorced from any form of art or beauty. Why else do democratic countries cling to their atavistic monarchs? Why do republican tourists flock to the deserted palaces of tasteless princes long dead? Millionaire Peter sleeps in an ivory and tortoise-shell bed and eats from gold plate? Millionairess Pauline takes a daily all-over bath in perfume? Fie on the wretches! But really we enjoy knowing that such luxury

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may still be in a dull, too uniform world. In our hearts we have all dreamed of wealth and splendor. Italy is the land where dreams come true.

Many Americans learn through sojourn in Italy that all their lives they have been starving for art and never knew it. Here in the land of statues, pictures and songs they find themselves expanding. They begin to take art seriously, *sans peur et sans reproche*. It affects their characters; for perhaps the first time in their lives they are not afraid of spontaneous emotion. As their knowledge increases their taste improves. They become amateurs, even connoisseurs. They know the secrets of Venetian glass and can discuss the periods of Raphael and the baneful influence of the great Michelangelo on later art. Back home, of course, these things are known to be the stock in trade of poseurs and diletantes. But in Florence or Venice or Rome they seem genuinely important and the real poseurs are those who pretend to take no notice of them. Strange paradox! But is it stranger than the paradox of the great American people, who claim to be in the van of civilization yet the majority of whose members not only ignore but do not even desire any form of art beyond the movie, the newspaper cartoon and the popular song? Once the subtle taste for art is acquired it cannot easily be foregone and no menu of existence is complete without its relish. Italians eat less physical food than Americans. Yet sometimes it seems that they set a richer table of living.

For one thing Italians are frank, simple, spontaneous, their closets hold no skeletons; the skeletons

stand at the house door and if you find them too ugly you need not enter. Any fool can compile a pompous list of Italian weaknesses (and in our moments of folly we all do), but it is not so easy to understand in what they are superior. Their frank acceptance of the realities of life shocks the sensitive foreigner. Later he comes to realize how the "materialistic" Italian is perhaps less the slave of matter than his idealistic self. The Italian does not worry so much about his soul and he frankly enjoys good food, sunshine, public esteem and the opposite sex; but he puts up with discomfort without a murmur, submits to privation with comparative indifference, and almost never sinks to the depths of brutish vices or excesses. Drunkenness is uncommon, brutality rare, deliberate cruelty almost unknown.

Intellectually complex, over theoretical, heroically logical, he is emotionally all of a piece. He has little false shame. He takes himself, with his virtues and defects, with entire calm. He is capable of sainthood, but he does not blink matters because they happen to be unpleasant. And somehow, so considered, they cease to be unpleasant.

The striking example is sex. It is a commonplace that Italians are over sexual. But are they really more given to sexual pleasures than other people? I doubt it, though the matter is hardly subject to proof. They frankly revere the saint but they themselves do not pretend to be all spirit. They discuss sex as frankly as the weather or eating and drinking. I remember a conversation in my house at the first meeting of a gray-haired philosopher with an elderly marchioness of a family that admits no margin of

nobility to the Italian reigning House. It went something like this:

THE MARCHIONESS.—You, distinguished sir, are by no means ugly and must have had many a golden passion in your youth.

THE PHILOSOPHER.—To confess the truth, marchioness, love of women never had any great hold upon me. I had small means as a young man and little time to spare. And then, it is my theory, which I seem to have demonstrated personally, that intense activity of the mind tends to weaken the sensual appetites.

THE MARCHIONESS.—Ah, it is easy for us to propound morality now that we have reached, alas, the age of cold reason. But I have no doubt that if I had known you at the age of twenty-five you would have been slower to tell me of your virtue.

THE PHILOSOPHER.—It may be so, marchioness. Circumstances alter cases.

Shocking depravity, isn't it? Our Puritan grandmothers would have stopped their ears from very shame. In Italy their fingers would rarely have been anywhere else. For such is the ordinary speech of ordinary virtuous people, from my dentist, who ascribes his good health to abstemious use of woman and a vegetarian diet, to our pretty servant who safeguards her chastity for fear of spoiling a good marriage. For perhaps no other people save the Spaniards so value chastity in unmarried women. Once married, the matter puts on a different face.

In matters of sex, Italians face facts. The same directness prevails throughout their entire lives.



Emotionally they are simple and spontaneous. Their curiosity is only equaled by their readiness to reveal themselves. They begin by asking your age, condition, health and the number and sex of your children. If you have none, why not? Don't you intend to have any? What is your income, anyway? You don't answer? Ah, the strange foreigners! Now they themselves have so many male children and one little female, and next year, if they can afford it, or perhaps anyway—who knows?—will have another one, or perhaps twins, and God grant it be male! What is the purpose of marriage anyway? If a man wants no children he will spend less and worry less with a pretty mistress than with a legitimate wife, etc., etc. Thus they will confess their sins, preferences, social or political ambitions, and expect your interest and sympathy. And you give it, understanding that this free intercourse constitutes an Italian's joy.

For there is not enough joy in Italy. Living is essentially a serious business, and although the laugh comes easily to Italian lips, there is next to no humor in their lives and little comedy. What comedy exists tends to be sarcastic, stinging—the Florentine *beffa* or practical joke. The average Italian takes small pleasure in life and does not seek pleasure. The reason is that he has ceased to believe in pleasure. It is not that he lacks the means or the opportunity; in no country in the world can luxury and amusement be had so cheaply. It is life itself that is at fault and the fault is in the nature of things and ineradicable. One may feel youth and warmth and love so keenly that the thought of dust and

ashes is insufferable. Youth and love, sunshine and children, these are the only true pleasures, and they illusory. Youth passes, love grows cold, loved ones die or grow ungrateful, sunshine cannot warm old age and the thought of death is bitter. Better the bitter than the bittersweet! Even as he seeks distraction the Italian mocks at himself. Life fails to fulfill its promise and death is inevitable; why hold to life? Better death in the fullness of youth, in the glory of strong passion, than gradual disillusion and bodily decay. Suicides for love are very common among the adolescent. Last winter an American and his mistress were found in bed one morning, suffocated by gas from a leaky pipe. When a respectable lady of my acquaintance heard the news, there was no word of regret or pharisaical nonsense about the wages of sin. She only said, "What a sweet death!" I believe that the fatalism of the Orient is less a matter of formulated conviction than of old age and disillusion, for Italians are very near to orientals in their lack of humor, their soberness, their contempt for death. Oriental, too, was the pessimism of Leopardi, modern Italy's greatest poet, whose refuge from bitterness was to plunge in the sea of his own sorrow—

*E li naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare—*

a pleasure that cannot be shared by more optimistic peoples. Among Europeans, Italians alone still seem to appreciate the superior beauty of tragedy.

For in sober truth, these elements of a single country and people—the age, beauty, variety, richness,

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art, simplicity, frankness, melancholy and unconquerable individualism of Italy and the Italians—create an atmosphere of somber poetry difficult to understand but indescribably attractive. Life so lived seems closer to its irreducible unit, the man with all his aspirations and failings, almost sublime, yet unspeakably brutish, inevitably human, ever unsatisfied, standing face to face with the great unknown of which no person has ever more than grazed the surface. Notwithstanding the Italian defects, I say that he who has known and understood Italy has added a new dimension to his existence. He has become wiser and more intimately human, less superficially optimistic but more soundly hopeful for mankind, and at the same time more charitable and tolerant of human sins. He has had a brief look at human splendor, known some of the peaks of achievement and to the end of his days can say, with Israel Zangwill:

I, too, have crossed the Alps and Hannibal himself had no such baggage of dreams and memories, such fife and drum of lyrics, such horns of ivory, such emblazoned standards and streamered gonfalons, flying and fluttering, such phalanxes of heroes, such visions of cities to despoil and riches to rifle—palace and temple, bust and picture, tapestry and mosaic. . . . I, too, have crossed the Rubicon and Cæsar gathered no such booty. Gold and marble and sardonyx, lapis lazuli, agate and alabaster, porphyry, jasper and bronze, these were the least of my spoils. . . . “*Ave Italia, regina terrarum!*” I cried, as I kissed the hem of thy blue robe, starred with white cities.



## CHAPTER II

### RUDE AWAKENING

“Italians are great singers,” said my friend, the musician, “but when they sing in choruses they always sing out of tune.” They somehow lack the gift of coöperation. When they work they work out of tune, when they think they think out of tune, even their common life is hopelessly individualistic and the result seems, to a superficial view, imminent anarchy.

It is largely a matter of misunderstanding and social emphasis, for no two members of the white race are less fitted to get on together than the average American and the average Italian. Think of the racial contrasts. Americans, on the whole, believe in efficient action and care comparatively little about good intentions, fit only for paving the road to hell. They believe in salvation by works. Italians are careful about motives; they realize that all men are great sinners and can be saved only through God’s infinite mercy. Americans believe in moral progress; in their hearts they are afraid of falsehood, for “honesty is the best policy” and they want to get on. Italians have little moral energy, and will lie about most things, from interest, indifference or sheer desire to please. Americans are reticent about their own sins; Italians will confess theirs with a sublime simplicity that endears them to the

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angels but seems to Anglo-Saxons sheer lack of decency. Thus the façade of American life is comparatively immaculate while that of Italy seems, to a self-righteous foreigner, sadly smirched. Americans fear and worship public opinion and never openly defy its dictums. For this reason they try to appear moral even when they are not, and for morality's sake do not hesitate to break family ties or hebraically to pluck out an offending eye. In Italy the family feeling—itself a form of individualism—is stronger than the moral sense or respect for public opinion and the drunkard father, criminal brother or fallen sister is sure of a welcome at home.

Americans are hearty and indiscriminating in their friendships, large in hospitality and generous; they can afford it. Italians look on the stranger with suspicion, and even when rich hate to give something for nothing. The greatest joy of Americans is reform; they are always ready to join in a crusade to better their neighbors. Thus they succeed in driving vice, idiosyncrasy, personality and originality underground. Italians care little for other men's opinions or manner of life and are tolerant to the point of supineness. Americans, valuing society alone, are ready to suppress or deform the unadaptable individual. Italians encourage the exceptional individual and do not worry about the masses. Americans are generous but uncharitable; Italians abound in that charity which Saint Paul declared to be greater than faith or hope. And nevertheless they are exasperating to live with.

Most people, to begin with, are frankly indolent and inefficient. They rarely overlook a beggar but

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in the larger affairs they believe in looking out for number one. They are uncompromising individualists. And individualism is precisely the quality the Americans have been taught to suspect. America is a well-grown forest without tall trees, Italy a dense undergrowth out of which rise majestically a few towering trunks.

But most of life is necessarily lived in common with one's fellows. The dominant element in human existence is social contact. True; that is precisely why, if you are an average American in Italy, you will often be tempted to consign the entire population to the place Dante first visited. The great individuals, who form the safeguard of the country, are rarely met and the intellectual generosity and fundamental good sense which so potently aid the nation in times of crisis do not emerge every day. Italian qualities are slow to reveal themselves, while the national defects lie all on the surface. At their best they lead a foreigner to adopt an attitude of superior indulgence; at their worst they provoke in him an exasperation which can only find adequate expression in blasphemy or crime.

The first effect of poverty is distrust. The entire commercial and economic system is organized on the assumption that all men are dishonest. You see it in the banks. The slightest transaction at an Italian bank is surrounded by a mesh of controls and counter controls calculated, if you like, to protect the client as well as the bank, if they have not in the meantime occasioned his death by bringing on a stroke of apoplexy. Banking, invented in Italy, would seem to have regressed with the centuries.

These endless formalities, these reams of documents, are themselves telltale. For if Italians and their methods are honest, why this triple and quintuple guaranty against fraud? Why dare no man trust his brother? The same deadly formality, worsened by bureaucratic frivolity, prevails in all government services, especially in the railroad and postal administrations. No trunk or valise may be checked until it satisfies the baggage-despot that it is burglar proof. No letter or postal parcel can be insured unless it bristles with sealing wax. Yet there is no other civilized country which tolerates such wretched railroads or mail services, where baggage and freight are so often lost, robbed or smashed, or letters so regularly go astray. Theoretically, if you lose something you can obtain damages. Practically the ordeal of insolent employees to be faced and endless forms to be filled out causes you to stomach the loss in silence.

Commercially, Italy is too often the country of frauds, adulterations and substitutes. There is little respect for sound quality; guaranties are rarely given and less rarely maintained, and if a merchant can palm off an inferior article for a better one he does so unblushingly. It hardly occurs to him that this is dishonest. A deal is a deal and "you saw the horse." Since the war it has, in Rome, been impossible to obtain unwatered milk or a bottle of genuine ink. Nor does an offer of extra payment reveal honest goods. For the Italian merchant cares more for his pride than for gain and does not worry particularly whether he sell or not. To make two quarts of milk where there was but one, or to

open and lengthen a bottle of imported ink, are "rights" he does not intend to sacrifice. In this respect there are differences between city and city.

Quality and commercial honesty are high in the North and what I say of them does not apply to North Italian business. But at Rome and in the South the only safe axiom in commercial dealings is to believe nothing but the evidence of your eyes. A verbal contract is rarely observed with precision. Any one will agree to do a piece of work by a certain day and break his promise unblushingly. A plumber or an electrician will name a price in advance and when the job is completed present a bill for double the amount. You do not have to pay it, of course, but if you refuse he will if possible damage the work he has finished and, in any case, lay siege to your pocketbook. This financial assault is one of the most trying things foreigners have to endure. The attacker shifts his position with the agility of a lawyer. He will reason; the work was longer than he had thought, it cost him more for material than he had calculated, he has done it well whereas he might have cheated (and probably has). He will threaten; another time you may remain in total darkness forever or swim in your flooded kitchen, but no respectable Italian will again slave for a foreign miser. He will flatter; he can see that you are a man above the common, full of generosity. If you still prove firm he will overwhelm you with an avalanche of argument, sweeping away your puny attempts to reply in his language and fairly swamping you. And then of a sudden he will change and wheedle; he is a poor man and you are rich; it is



unworthy of a noble foreign gentleman to hold out for a few dollars with a humble Italian workman; alas! he needs money to pay a doctor's bill; Excellency, have pity and think of his starving children!

You may resist, but the chances are you will not. Even if you finally succeed in driving him away you emerge from the struggle exhausted, your nerves on edge, thoroughly unhappy, ready to leave the accursed country by the first train. No, a verbal contract or a promise is worth little.

Unfortunately, a written document is not worth much more. The Italian government recently repudiated a several-million-dollar contract with a Philadelphia coal company because they had in the meantime found a place where coal could be bought cheaper.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be done; the officials not only repudiated their contract without the shadow of an excuse, but at an insinuation that they had done wrong, rose and tore their hair in righteous indignation. Sue? Of course, if you have plenty of money, unlimited patience and no particular engagements for a year. Italians understand the commercial lie as an integral part of business; foreigners find it devastating.

In a moment of distraction I purchased a motorcycle. A friend of the seller offered to make me a side car. I met him, he showed me a sample of his work and we agreed on the price, sixteen hundred *lire*, of which, six hundred down, and the remainder on delivery within two weeks. So ran the written contract and the month was February.

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<sup>1</sup> It is only fair to state that since the war strict honesty in international commerce has become rarer in all countries.

March came and brought no side car. April arrived with explanations.

There had been strikes.

The weather was bad and I was disposed to be tolerant. But in May I suggested immediate delivery. A little patience! In a few days he hoped to satisfy me. In June I wrote again: my side car or my six hundred *lire*! No answer. Toward the end of the month when the heat of summer was well upon us, I took legal counsel. The lawyer wrote a letter; deliver the side car or give back the six hundred *lire* within three days. Then the unexpected happened. Called on the phone one morning I was informed that my side car was ready for delivery. But there was a difficulty. Could I not come immediately to the factory? With emphasis I explained that I could not. In the afternoon the maker of side cars appeared in person, in appearance apologetic, but with guile in his heart. It displeased him, he said, to have so long deprived me of the pleasure of motor-ing, but what could I expect in these times of labor troubles and disorganized train service? Now, thanks to God, the work was finished and could be delivered the following morning. Only—his voice saddened—raw material had increased in cost since February; the new price could hardly be less than twenty-four hundred *lire*. If I refused to pay he would have to sell the side car elsewhere.

I mentioned the terms of the contract. He sighed regretfully. Should I mistake his motives and resort to a court of law he would, he confessed, be forced to perpetrate a small fraud whereby he could



easily convince the judge not only that he was justified in raising the price but that in reality he had never been able to make the side car at all.

Here, to my honor be it said, the worm turned. I repulsed his proposition with dignity, I refused his efforts to compromise ("say two thousand *lire*?"), I promised not only to bring the matter before a magistrate but in case I lost, to pile suit upon suit and prosecute him till my anger was appeased or my money exhausted.

The maker of side cars was frankly perplexed. Lawsuits are expensive. Why would I willingly spend thousands of *lire* in bringing him to justice when by yielding a few hundreds above the established price I could be saved all bother? When he spoke these words I knew that I had him, that the mere threat of suit would bring him to time, for to him the matter was only one of money. Italian business too often knows no principles save that of the greatest gain with the least effort. Within a week I was riding my side car through the narrow Roman streets. S. P. Q. R.—the signature of immortal Rome—once they stood for *Senatus Populus que Romanus*; to-day I swear it—they mean no more than "small profits quick returns."

Poverty and ignorance play an enormous part in this attitude as in all Italian life. The aristocracy and middle classes are well educated, but provincial. Generally speaking, they are not curious about countries and methods and peoples of other lands. Even when they are widely experienced they do not, for some reason I have never understood, attempt to set the common people an example. Perhaps they

feel the weight of tradition too heavily. The common people have a quick and ready wit and a natural cunning but almost no curiosity. They learn to be shrewd in business deals, but with rare exceptions they are the slaves of their habits and superstitions and absolutely inert before all questions of common interest.

This lack of normal curiosity was clearly shown at the front. Time and time again I have stopped my car to ask the way of the nearest soldier.

“What is the name of this village?”

“Signor, I don’t know.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Two months.”

“Do you know where this road leads?”

“Signor, no.”

“What is your regiment?”

“The Forty-sixth.”

“What is the name of the Colonel?”

“I don’t know.”

“Of your captain?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you know anything? Of your corporal?”

“Ah, yes, signor; his name is Bruno.”

During the war, it is only fair to say, much of this stupidity was quickened into life. The presence of a considerable number of *Americani*, as emigrants who have returned from America are called, leavened the heavy loaf of ignorance like yeast, and many a peasant went home to his village with such a ferment in his head as he had never known before.

The question of uncleanness is delicate. Foreigners generally believe Italy dirtier than it is. Now it

is absolutely untrue that Italians are dirtier *in person* than other continental Europeans. They are cleaner than some. Yet it is to an Italian phenomenon that can be traced the enormous filth of the Middle Ages, which lasted almost to our days.

The decline of cleanliness which accompanied the decay of Mediterranean paganism has been traced to the influence of Catholicism, and there was something to be said for religion. Pagan Greece and Rome bathed only too much. But at the bottom of the historical filthiness that succeeded the Classical period lies a simple fact. Early Christian Rome, which had become the seat of the Western Church, was abundantly supplied with water brought from the mountains in those monumental aqueducts whose ruins still beautify the Campagna. In the year 537 A. D. the Gothic king Witigis, laid siege to the city and, in order to reduce it, cut the aqueducts. The barbarian could destroy the aqueducts but was quite unable to stop the flow of water which, running unchecked, turned the Campagna into a swamp. "There was, however," wrote Jesse Benedict Carter, "another and more disastrous result in that, by the destruction of these aqueducts, the custom of bathing was discontinued. To be sure, the baths were disapproved of by the Church because of their immorality, but had the aqueducts and the baths continued they would have been purified by the Church and doubtless finally accepted. Thus the sanction of Christian Rome would have been placed on the habit of bathing and obedience to Rome and imitation of her would have made the custom universal in the Western world. It is safe to say that, had

the Goths not cut the aqueducts, bathing would have been as customary in Europe as it is in Japan. There would have been no need of the renaissance of bathing which the nineteenth century brought about." 2

—In discussing unclean and unsanitary habits it is again necessary to draw a line between North and South Italy. Northern Italy is externally clean—not so clean as Switzerland or England, but as clean as France. South Italy is dirty. (I mention only customs and acts which I myself have seen, not once but often.) In the small villages all that would elsewhere constitute sewage is dumped into the street—often poured from the windows. Many villages have no drains. Natural functions, therefore, seek the open, where they enjoy a freedom of exercise impossible to imagine. Even in large cities many houses have no plumbing. Thus walls, sidewalks, the steps of churches and public buildings, stairways, quays, parks, ruins, serve as depositories for human filth. Occasionally well-dressed little girls of twelve can be seen on the sidewalks of crowded streets, tranquilly relieving themselves. In my presence a mother has encouraged her baby to befoul the aisle of a railroad car. And no one minds. Such conditions begin in Central Italy and grow worse as one goes south. They are very bad in Rome, a city whose inhabitants build sumptuous monuments, but neglect to make the installation of some kind of plumbing obligatory.

Many peasants in the villages live in dwellings consisting of a single room where men, women,

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<sup>2</sup> *Religious Life in Ancient Rome*, p. 213.

children, animals, fowls, and vermin live together. This can in large part be traced to lack of water, for villagers raised in a state of unwashed blessedness do not change their habits just because water becomes available. The need is for plumbing, to be sure, but greater is the need for public sentiment, self-respect and the rigid enforcement of existing laws.

The modern Italian is an illogical and fascinating combination of past and present, of old man and callow youth. Yet in his age he has remained primitive and his youth is big with worldly wisdom. First and foremost among primitive superstitions, he believes in the *jettatura* or evil eye, a strange influence for misfortune possessed independently of their will by certain persons. The individual *jettatore* may be a man of blameless character. It is not his fault; he is to be pitied—and avoided. Often the mere sight of such a sinister being will bring trouble; to mention his name is an imprudence; to go willingly into his presence, grave danger; to frequent him on friendly terms, sure disaster. There is no sure way of warding off the effects of the evil eye but something may be accomplished if the threatened person will promptly make “the horns”—extend, that is, the first and little finger of either hand while keeping the two middle ones closed. The same general result can be obtained by wearing on one’s person a small gold or coral “horn” and the carters in the Roman Campagna swing a ram’s horn beneath their cart, ostensibly to carry grease for the wheels, but traditionally to ward off danger. In the last analysis the only way to escape the *jettatura* is sedu-



lously to avoid the *jettatore*. A man known to possess the fearful attribute can bring terror into the hearts of thieves or walk unharmed into a den of murderers. If he appears in a Roman salon he is liable to find the other guests scattering like a swarm of flies, seizing their hats and rushing from the contaminated household. No social prestige can overcome popular fear of the *jettatura*. A prince presumably descended from the patricians of ancient Rome is credited with this baneful quality and to mention his name in a crowd of Italians is to provoke a perfect forest of "horns."

How then can a *jettatore* be identified? Some people claim to know him by his appearance. "I saw at once that he was a *jettatore*," they announce, "and took the proper precautions." But generally the dread secret only reveals itself to the inductive researcher. It is remarked by the curious that the trail of a certain individual is followed by woe. Suspicion immediately falls upon him; he is watched, especially if he possess any personal peculiarities. Then one day some one close to him is the victim of grave misfortune—and his reputation is made and his doom sealed. If he be rich he may hold out in solitude against the decree of society. If he be dependent upon social contact for his living he is ruined.

One such example has come to my personal knowledge. A Roman *maestro* or music teacher and composer, named—reader, make the horns! but I spare you the danger—held an excellent position. His compositions were played, his pupils numerous. One day misfortune came upon him. He lost his

small fortune, his relatives died, he fell ill, he married his servant, she began to produce children at an alarming rate, his pupils fell away, his compositions were put aside or returned unread, and through musical Rome the horrid fact became known: *Maestro* — had the evil eye. For a few years the victim strove against the ostracism that was reducing him and his ever-growing progeny to misery and finally gave up the fight and removed to a small town—a broken old man. To-day he lives by giving music lessons to a few miserable pupils while within a chest there is an ever-growing pile of music manuscript, which no one cares to read.

When you throw these facts in the face of an educated Italian his behavior is strange. He may, though it is not likely, sincerely deplore them. Usually, however, he makes the “horns” and answers, “What would you? He is a *jettatore*.” If you are so impolite as to pin him to the wall with the blunt question, “Do you believe in the evil eye?” his dismay becomes evident. “No,” he will answer, in a pained tone, “I do not believe but I take no chances.”

Or else he will tell you stories full of circumstantial evidence intended to strike terror. “An American, whom you yourself knew, once invited a famous *jettatore* to dinner. The news communicated to the cook almost provoked the latter’s immediate exit from the household, but she was finally persuaded to stay. When the fatal evening came every dish was burned.”

“Naturally,” you answer, “with the cook afraid for her life.”



“The servant was so intent on making the ‘horns’ when in the neighborhood of the *jettatore* that she dropped a tray and smashed a valuable set of dishes.”

“Nothing remarkable in that either,” you object.

“But the cat got into the grand piano and it had to be ripped to pieces in order to get pussy out. How do you explain that? The American stated that he did not believe in the *jettatura* but would never have a *jettatore* suspect to dinner again!”

There you have it. What can you do but wonder?

Superstitions are of various kinds. There is the superstition among the Roman populace that American frozen meat is not fit to eat, which keeps many an Italian on an almost vegetable diet.

There is the superstition in parts of the country that a milch cow must be kept all her life in a stable and must never be allowed to go out and eat the clean, sweet grass.

There is the superstition in Rome that it is unhealthy to sleep in a room with the window open.

There is the remarkable belief on the part of many gardeners that if women touch flowers during certain days in each month, the flowers immediately die.

Most of these beliefs have a logical or at least a historical explanation. Italian railroads have few refrigerator cars and it is quite possible that frozen meat spoils in the process of thawing. Italy is full of herbs of which cows who eat become ill. When Rome was infested with malaria, night-flying mosquitoes would penetrate open windows and bite the sleepers. Those who closed the windows were likely

to escape. To-day malaria has disappeared from the city of Rome but the belief that fever and open windows are in some manner connected is general. For the flower superstition I should not risk an explanation.

Purposely, too, I have omitted the common religious beliefs in rupture-curing saints, miracle-working images, speaking black madonnas painted by Saint Luke, statues whose eyes turn and angels in forests. These are but the degeneracy of religious belief and to impugn them is to impugn the validity of the religion itself, a position I do not care to take. Yet there can be no doubt but that belief in them may tend to prevent proper familiarity with those elementary laws of science and experience whose observance makes for saner, better living.

There are, however, three other characteristics which strike and annoy a foreigner in Italy. These are the traits in the average Italian character which make good understanding between Italians and Americans extremely difficult. But most of them are not, it may be observed, restricted to Italians—they are shared to a greater or less extent by all men.

There are, however, three Italian characteristics which are almost purely Italian. They do not particularly annoy strangers; on the surface they appear innocent, harmless indulgences. Yet in my opinion they are the gravest handicaps Italians have to face. I refer to their vanity, their dependence on empty words, and their inordinate love of hearing themselves talk.

Italian vanity is a product of past achievement,

present ignorance and eternal individualism. It is vast, takes a thousand forms, and cripples effort toward a more effective modern life. What is the use of any change when all that is Italian is already a model for the world? Whether founded or not, the assumption of superiority is usually so childishly expressed that it excites amusement rather than resentment. If anything, it is less offensive than the smug self-satisfaction of the Americans, the blind self-worship of the French, the incurable egoism of the Germans, or the maddening superiority of the English. But it is none the less a source of hurt to Italians themselves.

For all his shrewdness, the average Italian is completely taken in by praise and hyperbole. Tell him he is a good fellow and you like him; he remains cold. But call him a noble Roman, the legitimate child of Latin virtue and civilization, the younger brother of Dante—announce that his country, his army, his customs, his women, his intelligence, his nobility of soul outshine those of other countries as the sun the moon—and he's yours. He cannot help it; even though he knows better, it goes to his head. In the popular mind foreigners are divided into friends of Italy, who are expected to express themselves in this tone, and enemies of Italy who are known by their failure to praise.

More deadly than his vanity and, in my opinion, the most unfortunate of the Italian weaknesses, is his love of rhetoric, preferably his own. For in case you do not praise him as he would like, he does it himself. "We Italians are a great people," he will begin, voicing a belief in which you are quite

willing to concur. But he does not mean it as you do. "The world does not appreciate us. We have nothing to learn from any one. But why should the world appreciate us when we do not appreciate our own greatness, our courage, our generosity? We are too unassuming, too honest, too sincere. We are a nation of poets"—by which he means, not that Italy produces glorious poetry but that he and his friends are too ethereal for this practical world! "We are idealists and in the name of our ideal we refuse to submit to the scheming commercialism of you Anglo-Saxons as we fought and conquered the materialism of Germany and repulse the shallow civilization of France. To conclude," he winds up with a dramatic gesture, "we are Italians." You look at him a moment, irritated and surprised, and then you understand and smile. He does not really believe it; and he does not expect you to believe it. But he loves to roll it forth in a big voice and for you to dissent would be bad taste and spoil his pleasure. It is only self-indulgence in the national vice, rhetoric.

"We Italians," I heard Signor Nitti tell a group of American correspondents, "do not make revolutions, we make speeches." While perhaps technically inexact, this sentence is true in a larger sense. An immense amount of the national energy passes away in wind. One and all, the Italians love to spout words, a perfect cloud of them. This habit would be comparatively harmless were it not that these verbal gases, far deadlier than any employed in the war, do not float away but remain suspended between the speakers and the world and distort their vision.

Italians come in time to see everything through a smoke screen of hyperbole, rhetoric and simple nonsense.

How deadly may become the effects of this hallucination appeared during the war. The army chiefs, greedy for power and impatient with interference, planned to keep the general public from any knowledge of the reality of warfare. For this purpose were employed the official war correspondents. Each day these correspondents poured forth their little clouds of exaggeration. Fighting was made to seem a glorious gymnastic, tedium and discontent were forgotten, lack of success was hidden well within pompous rhetoric. Tiny skirmishes were magnified to battles, and bloody Pyrrhic victories, wherein were apparent only the tenacity of the unfortunate soldiers and the incapacity of the leaders, became so many Austerlitzes. All was for the best, in the best led and most heroic of armies! For some time the Italian public remained skeptical but in the end they could not resist this appeal to their vanity and they believed.

The correspondents themselves began to inhale the deadly fumes of their own gas and became unable to distinguish fact from fiction or to weigh the evidence of their eyes.

The last to succumb were the soldiers. At first in the trenches, where discontent was crawling, the swollen descriptions of unfailing victories caused extreme hilarity. But soon the poison began to work. In their letters home the men began to borrow from the correspondents, describing not the truth they had lived but the lie they had read. This perver-



sion was the triumph of the Army chiefs. Neither the public nor the chiefs were thenceforth aware of the real state of mind of the soldiers. The result of an initial defeat was the rout that goes by the name of Caporetto, the triumph of rhetoric. The nation, chastened and purified, for a few brief months, faced the truth nakedly and triumphed. But success was too much for the people and reality again disappeared behind a fresh emission of gas.

The lust to speak is a formidable appetite and when it seizes a man he can rarely resist. In the street or in a café, alone or in company, when an Italian wants to *sfogarsi* (let off steam) he instantly gives way to the desire. An audience is not necessary.

Several times I have witnessed an individual shouting and gesturing into empty space. The speaker enjoys his own activity. The words exalt him like alcohol and gradually his sense of the real dies.

Much of the boastful nationalism now prevalent in certain Italian circles can be traced to the congestion of the national consciousness with many words. Sometimes it would seem that to serve his country best an Italian reformer must start with a gag.

When one wonders why, possessing so many admirable qualities, living in a land so favored by nature, many Italians are under the spell of cynicism, indifference, superstition, lack of public spirit, one comes to the conclusion that these are the drawback of excessive age and overpopulation. Nothing is more amusing or strange than the predilection Italians have for old age. This is peculiarly true of politics.

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At forty, one is still a "young man." At fifty, one reaches the age of discretion; at sixty, one becomes "authoritative;" at sixty-five, one is ripe for the Senate or a post in the Cabinet; at seventy, one may aspire to be Prime Minister—through seniority. Italy is very old and very young. But Italy is also overpopulated. The excess population must be taken care of. The energetic emigrate, the indolent and cynical remain to encumber the government offices.

"Many too many are born," wrote Nietzsche; "for the superfluous ones was the State devised." Truly in Italy the State would seem to exist to give employment to the idle and inefficient. And if methods are somewhat slack in private life, in the bureaucracy they become truly astonishing. Once in power the indolence and insolence of these thousands of employees surpass the credible. Men who in private life would be good citizens, steadfast friends, charitable neighbors, become little tyrants. Petty bureaucrats give themselves the airs of nabobs; small chiefs of useless offices make a point of being inaccessible. In most of these offices the chief considers himself too big a man to keep office hours or be punctual at appointments. The State telephone services depend exclusively on the good or bad will of the telephone girls. Railroad employees and postal clerks seem to take pleasure in accomplishing the minimum prescribed by law. There is no zeal to serve and little friendliness. I have seen ten persons, among them a soldier on leave, miss a train because a ticket seller in a Rome station refused to hurry. Fortunately for the bureau-



crats and government employees generally, their insolence is no greater than the tolerance and patience of the public.

Suspicion and indifference are the inevitable results of misgovernment and a bitter struggle for existence in a poor and overpopulated land. Italians have no faith in human nature. Their skepticism of moral values makes for an exasperated realism which often defeats its own ends, for in the process of taking the cash and letting the credit go, really great gains become impossible. Sound economics cannot grow on distrust and human infirmity. Yet knowledge of human infirmity here becomes the chief stepping-stone to wealth and power. Among the people, almost the highest title of esteem is that of *furbo*, cunning. Fortunately, this pitiless attitude is relieved by native generosity and good-humored tolerance, together with a tendency to take life easily. Otherwise business and political life in Italy might proceed with a ferociousness elsewhere unknown.

In the main the unpleasant as well as the delightful aspect of Italian life springs from the unconquerable individualism of a shrewd, highly gifted people, just a little weary of the burden of past achievement.

Any fool, I said, can compile a list of Italian weaknesses. This is my list. But at least my contribution is the result of several years sojourn in Italy. Obviously, the weaknesses here attested cannot be ascribed to an entire people; there is perhaps no other country where men of such remote mental

and moral levels live so intimately mingled. But I cannot, therefore, admit that there is no real Italian character. If we could shape a national being—a composite creation embodying the essence of all Italians—it would, I believe, have to be endowed with these general defects.

Also, I have seen Italy through Rome. Possibly Italy seen through Milan or Turin would have seemed different. But to me the view through Rome is the truer because Rome as the bureaucratic center is largely inhabited by representatives of every city and district. At the same time I will admit with Romain Rolland that “the political life of a nation is only the most superficial aspect of its being. To know its interior life, which is the source of its action, we must penetrate its soul through its literature, philosophy, arts.” To these we must add, in Italy, a knowledge of its family life, the most significant side of the national existence.

## CHAPTER III

### SOBER DAYLIGHT

After you have thrilled with the beauty, richness, variety and humanity of Italian life and realized the greatness of this people down the centuries; after you have met the national failings, analyzed them in their every manifestation and petulantly cursed the race, past, present and future—then and then only, you are in a position to pass deliberate judgment on them. You begin to discover that the object of your delight as well as of your execration is a clearly defined personality, giving to this people a national character which differentiates it sharply from other peoples. Humanity is disappointingly uniform; of the peoples I know the Italians are, despite their quick adaptability to foreign customs, the most personal. Superficially they resemble the French and the Spaniards. Fundamentally they are unlike either.

The first problem for a foreigner who is familiar with all the unpleasantness which living in Italy invariably entails, is to explain why, none the less, life in Italy is so inexplicably attractive. Probably the answer to this is to be sought in the lack of constraint. The Italian laws leave private life untouched; they are administered in a spirit of tolerance; there exists outside them no form of social tyranny or social norm to which the individual must

conform on pain of ostracism. Italy, like the "great city" of Whitman, is a land where "men and women think lightly of the laws." The intelligent foreigner arriving from another land experiences annoyance but also a sense of delicious relief.

Modern Italians have the virtues of their faults. Now until men have grown up and learned tolerance, democracy will always be a hair shirt. So long as democracy exacts conformity, so long as the collectivity insists on treating the individuals like so many infants, for the physical and moral salvation of whom it is eternally responsible, life in such a collectivity will be painful for independent spirits. Italy is a land for adults. It goes to the extreme of considering each human being a responsible citizen, mentally and morally entitled to decide his own line of thought and conduct. So long as he does not trespass on the very narrow preserves forbidden by law, he meets no strong social forces tending to limit him to a certain conduct and point of view. He may obstruct traffic on the sidewalk while he discusses politics or women with his friends. He is permitted to sing and play the mandolin in the street all through the long summer nights regardless of intending sleepers. He may drive his automobile as fast as it will go and be held responsible only in case of accident.<sup>1</sup> He may get drunk, he may go a-wenching with princess or kitchen maid. Or he may retire to the wilderness on parched peas and cold water with only the phantoms of Saint Anthony for consolation . . . and enjoy the homage paid to a holy man. Even monarchy in Italy is not a form

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<sup>1</sup> I believe there are speed laws, but no one observes them.

of political privilege but a symbol of unity; nowhere does it offer fewer plums to the monarch. Peasants and hotel porters may pay obeisance to counts and marquises, in number unending; but socially, modern Italy is democratic and almost any one with qualifications can obtain entrance to what is called the best society. He is free—to become what his education and abilities will permit.

The virtue of disorganization is the freedom it allows. Italy is a land of liberty—a word that successive generations of Americans are less and less able to understand. In order to persuade ourselves that we are still free we have had recourse to sophistry; liberty, we sententiously remark, is not to be confused with license, as though a license to ride a bicycle or peddle peanuts were anything but freedom to do the same! The real point lies in the extent of individual liberty held to be compatible with organized life. Italians hold that freedom must be large even though organized life suffer somewhat; Americans would mould and perfect organized life even at the cost of deforming the individual. Americans are free to be good but not to be bad. Italians reserve the right to choose between sin and virtue wherever the immediate welfare of others is not directly involved. They prefer potential motor accidents to speed laws (accidents are rare), the satisfaction of spitting on the floor to hygiene, filthy streets to prying health inspectors, a few drunkards (there are almost none) to nation-wide prohibition, and general disorder to that forest of *verboten*s brought to such exquisite cultivation in Prussia and like to be imitated in the United States. Their preference is

deliberate; it raises the individual will to the position of final arbiter in morals and philosophy as well as in politics and art; and even where the State feels it necessary to restrain and punish, it does so tolerantly and without cant.

Naturally, such liberty can hardly be imagined by peoples like ours, and never approved. Here is a nation that prefers individual development to collective efficiency, license to conformity, disorder to paternalism, free moral choice (which always means some open vice) to compulsory good conduct. But, once tasted, such liberty takes hold of the mind and is hard to relinquish. To many Americans, gasping for air in the grip of anti-white-slave laws, prohibition, anti-cigarette leagues, moral uplifters, Billy Sundays, Chautauqua orators, home missionaries, sociologists and efficiency experts, Italy may well seem the promised land. Here men are free, free to be idle, vicious, drunken, selfish, careless of others; but also to be sincere; free to think and act above or below the level of group opinion as their own minds dictate and their own limitations permit. That is why, other things being equal, he who has lived in Italy may well find life elsewhere cramped and misshapen.

But just where all this liberty tends to turn the country into an asylum there is a point where Italian tolerance wisely ends. For six months an anarchist who preaches assassination may talk unmolested. One day he is arrested and sentenced—under an existing law, made for just such occasions. But Italians apply law elastically. Allowances are made for individuality. The penalties of evil doing are



light. Yet at a certain point common sense awakens and decides that matters have gone far enough. The anarchist or grafter finds himself in jail. The Italians are a level-headed people. Much extravagant talk there is, but words—however irresponsible—lead inevitably to thought; much thought, even when muddled, must contain some sense. The modern Italian may seem to float airily in clouds of meaningless rhetoric or roll in the morasses of passion, but he never really takes his feet from the ground. His common sense saves him from fanaticism.

While most Italians are not greatly developed, Italy contains a sprinkling of individuals superior in every respect. What the average lacks in civic spirit and honesty the exception makes up in saintliness or genius. After all, though animals are of interest as a species, mankind becomes significant—becomes man—only in its highest representatives, a Buddha, a Plato, a Saint Catherine, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Lincoln. Considered with a view to its human peaks modern Italy occupies a notable if not commanding place in the world. And if this method of judgment go contrary to that practice of evaluating averages which characterizes our pseudo-democracy, then so much the worse for pseudo-democracy.

Strange quality of an emotional, superstitious people is the reasoning mania. This runs through all strata of the nation and is as native to the uneducated as to the academic. Your cook must explain the burning of the roast in terms of syllogism or more often of an enthymeme. The tailor has not



finished your suit a month after it was promised because "in the first place . . . in the second place . . . in the third place," all solemnly shown on his fingers and with appropriate gestures. Finally you are ready to admit that it was your fault and not his, if only he will shut up. No one ever accepts an order or follows an instruction without a preamble of logic. Usually his reasoning issues as a monologue. In this respect the Italian is like the Frenchman; he is logical always, in the beginning and *in extremis*, so logical that he often ceases to be intelligent and is almost never practical. His logic takes the form of recapitulation; discussion becomes a series of separate discourses, each of which treats the topic in full with no regard for what has previously been stated. This was the practice of the French and Italian delegates at the Peace Conference where their long speeches drove the British and American representatives to despair . . . and to sleep. Thus the subtle, complex planning of French and Italian bureaucracy becomes monstrous, cumbersome, ridiculous when translated into the brittle language of practice. Recently the railroad fares on Italian lines were increased something like 18.18 per cent and the calculation of the difference left to the ticket sellers! The theory may be perfect, the result is usually partial paralysis.

One of the most incomparable masterpieces of procedure ever evolved by the Italian bureaucracy can be experienced by any one in Italy who has felt the unfortunate desire to drive a motor car or motorcycle. The bureaucracy insists that the candidate first obtain a certificate of fitness and this is, on the

face of it, a reasonable insistence and beneficial to public health. But consider it in practice. Understand, please, that I am not exaggerating.

The applicant begins his pilgrimage by obtaining as best he may: (1) a birth certificate showing him to be of age (if over eighteen but less than twenty-one a written permission from his parent or guardian must be added); (2) a penal certificate of recent date proving the absence of a criminal record; (3) a medical certificate given by a military or municipal physician, certifying that the applicant possesses no physical disabilities prejudicial to the proper guiding of a motor vehicle (blind men, for instance, are proverbially poor chauffeurs); (4) a certificate of residence given by the mayor; (5) a sworn statement that the applicant can both read and write; (6) a "legalized" photograph. The first five documents must be written on stamped paper.

Once in possession of the six legalized documents the applicant must send them with a written request also made out on stamped paper and a money order for two dollars, to the local office of the Railroad Club. An authorized mechanical engineer scrutinizes the two dollar bill against the light and thus insured against counterfeit solemnly pockets the amount as his fee and summons the applicant to a theoretical and practical examination of gasoline engines. The theoretical examination depends on the temper of the examiner. It may be very easy or very difficult—impossible for any one but a skilled mechanic to pass. On one occasion a young man of my acquaintance was questioned for an hour on the parts and functions of an *aéroplane* motor (which he

had never seen) and flunked because he could not answer properly. In case he fail, the candidate goes home and studies for another trial, which he may have whenever he likes, on submitting another request on stamped paper with the aforesaid documents and two more dollars. If he passes he takes the engineer for a short ride through the street and if successful in this practical test he is given a seventh document.

This evidence of capacity he puts in the envelope with the other six and makes a new request on stamped paper, this time to the Prefect of the Province, adding to the above a special note book or *libretto*, model P, which he has previously obtained for a small sum from the Milan office of the *Touring Club Italiano*. His work is now over. After a few days' consideration the Prefect's assistant takes his feet off the desk long enough to fill out and have the Prefect sign a perfect Certificate of Fitness, possessing which the applicant may look the whole world in the face.

In this procedure the majority of Italians find nothing to complain of. It is logical; it fulfills the thirst for centralized government inherited from the ancient Romans through Napoleon; and for the ancient Romans modern Italians have only the greatest respect. Rightly or wrongly they hold themselves to be the only true heirs to Roman *virtù* and to possess certain qualities known as Latinity or Italianity which make for unquestioned superiority. A recent writer ended a eulogy of a Spanish writer by the following jewel: "But he was a Spaniard; that is, a Latin; that is, a Roman."

But surely nothing is less Roman than the modern reasoning mania, which instead suggests the Levantine. Italians, so realistic in many ways, would rather reason than investigate (it is less work) and will argue about the time of day for an hour rather than refer to a watch. Easily imaginable (though little Roman) is the effect of oratory on such persons; it is my opinion that a starving man could be kept from a hearty meal or a murderer checked in the moment of his crime if only he could be persuaded to stop and "listen to reason."

But one can never enunciate a generality about Italians without having to stop and contradict it in relation to certain individuals. Most Italians are unpractical but many of them have a remarkable grasp on ideas and events which makes them exceptionally good administrators, engineers and business men. Politicians like Giovanni Giolitti, financiers like Pio Perrone of Ansaldo or Signor Toeplitz of the Banca Commerciale or Agnelli of the Fiat Company, labor leaders like G. M. Serrati and D'Aragona; these are efficient in the American sense. Especially in the more skilled kinds of construction work and in mechanical invention the Italians excel. Where science and art blend, where manual skill becomes a labor of love, in the designing of an aëroplane, in the tuning up of an automobile for a race, in the construction of roads or the building of buildings, in all the arts and crafts, whether of embroidery, jewelry, leather work, glass, metal tracery or hammering, these people are to-day unsurpassed. Moreover, any work that can be made the peculiar creation of a single individual will always be well

done. It is in coöperation that the Italian falters. But where he can travel alone he travels far. Who surpasses in skill or courage the Italian chauffeurs or aviators? The Italians are not a martial people, but greater individual warriors could nowhere be found. Other fleets are said to maintain a higher standard of efficiency, but only Italy has produced a Luigi Rizzo, who in a thirty foot motor boat affronted and sank a dreadnought. Even in politics the sins of the majority are often redeemed by the daring or foresight of single individuals. Thus when Wilson challenges the Italian nation, and its representatives, Orlando and Sonnino, humiliate their nation by a return in the dark of night to the Peace Conference they have abandoned, Major Reina and Gabriel D'Annunzio coolly defy the Allies and realize the national hopes.

The harshness of many phases of Italian life is really softened by appropriate human relations. No one so much as the Italian changes with personal contact. Toward humanity, the world, the crowd, all the mass of human beings outside his own circle, he is indifferent. Mankind in general makes no appeal to him. Sociological schemes intended for human betterment fail to fire his imagination. He grieves no more over the misery of an unknown world than the American stock broker over the fate of the lambs he is fleecing. But once you enter an Italian's world as a human entity with a definite personality, his attitude toward you changes. Nine times out of ten he proves to be kind hearted; his sympathies respond almost automatically to the sight of real misfortune and the tribes of beggars



that overrun the cities are fostered by his sheer inability to resist an appeal for charity.

Once the foreigner in Italy has made friends, the difficulties which beset his path largely disappear. In appearance the mountains still loom on every side; the wall of indifference, indolence and "impossibility" seems just as impenetrable; but really it is no longer so. Friendship can draw the sting of ill will; bureaucratic mountains can be tunneled for a friend, indifference drops away. "The division between friend and enemy," says Gilbert Murray, "goes far deeper down into human nature than that between good and bad." The laws, it is explained, exist for the vulgar herd, for persons of no influence, no money, no circle of acquaintances, no importance. But for you special provisions exist. You can find sugar and flour and cheese when there is none on the market; you can travel on an engine when a strike has tied up all the railroads; you may even find a house where there is none to be had or cause yards of governmental red tape to be torn to shreds. A large part of the lawlessness of Italy can be traced to the strength of personal relations. For between the rigid enforcement of a rule—often patently stupid—and loyalty to a friend, few functionaries will hesitate for an instant. Much of what is commonly taken for corruption entails no money bribery. Italian officials do not pretend to be impartial in their administration. Between a friend and a rank outsider they quite naturally choose the first and he gets the useful tip, the extra ticket or the fat contract. If the result is additional expense to the State, the real victim is the public—that mass

of anonymous men and women for whom no one cares two straws.

A mere acquaintance receives special consideration, a friend fat plums, but for a member of the family or a relative, however distant, no favor is too outrageously partisan. In consequence there prevails in both public and private life the most unblushing nepotism. Prime Ministers do not hesitate to surround themselves with aspiring sons-in-law, nephews and grandchildren. Much of the corruption that has been charged against Giovanni Giolitti, the great political boss, amounts only to a rigid application of favoritism. Who shall blame a Prime Minister if he reward his friends and crush his enemies according to the most exquisite logic—if he aid his son-in-law to become deputy and later name him senator? The system, to be sure, reduces public life to a struggle between rival clans. It is almost as personal as Balkan government. But few Italians see anything to criticize. For the nucleus of Italian life is not the individual and still less the social class, but the family.

When at the front a soldier who has received two medals for valor and taken part in fifty encounters with the enemy, suddenly deserts, every one realizes that he is no ordinary skulker. The police know just where to look for him. They go straight to his home. If he is not immediately found a watch kept over the other members of his family will usually unearth him, for the chances are that he is hanging around for an opportunity to see his mother. No danger is great enough to keep him away; if caught he may be shot or condemned to hard labor for



twenty years but he must and will see his wife and children. It is the call of the family.

During the armistice a sergeant was tried for desertion. His officers all attested his splendid qualities; he had been an ideal soldier. Why had he deserted? He explained; his mother was ill, he had been refused leave of absence. Naturally he went home anyway, intending to return, and had been on his way when the police found him. How had he done wrong?

The letters from home which told the soldiers at the front of need and bureaucratic abuses were a great factor in bringing on the Caporetto disaster. The crops were rotting in the fields for lack of harvest men. The father had become too old and feeble to mind the store; there was not much to eat and a new baby coming. The town officials had refused to give his wife her war allowance unless she consented to horrible things. When he received a message of this kind, the Italian soldier did not hesitate, he went home.

Marriage is not what it is in other countries. The male Italian does not marry for love. If he wanted only love he might better remain single. He marries to found a family. In nine cases out of ten he respects and obeys his own father and mother until they die. He expects the same from his own children. He does not reason about population; the time simply comes when he wants a family of his own. The girl he chooses is from the beginning less his wife than the potential mother of his children. She must be virginal—the honor of the family demands it. If he can he investigates her

health and her parentage, for he desires strong children. His choice of her is guided less by her attractiveness than by her apparent capacities for successful motherhood. If he finds he can love her, so much the better, but love is not essential. It can be found elsewhere in any case.

He respects his own mother more than any one else in the world and will believe no evil of her. A notorious young rake whose mother had a wide reputation for casual loves was heard to remark with tears in his eyes, that at least his mother had remained pure. Lads of sixteen have been known to kill their mothers in defense of the family honor. After the mother comes the wife. The man may flit from flower to flower; the woman is the custodian of the purity of the home and the trust of the children. If she cannot love her husband, let her at least wait until her children are well grown before entering on love affairs of her own. The ideal of the husband is fulfilled when he can take his bride to dwell patriarchally with his own family.

An Italian may be a wastrel, a profligate, a thief, but he is almost always an indulgent father and, according to his lights, a good husband. Though he shut up his wife for months and forbid her to speak to any man but himself, he is kind to her. He frankly spoils her children. Around them the household revolves. From the time they are three years old, they have all the liberties and none of the cares of adults. They eat and drink what they please, they go to bed when they are sleepy. They are rarely punished and are loved with a kind of animal-like devotion which they pay back in kind.

In so far as possible a man never leaves his wife alone or a woman her husband. The number of American women who winter in Italy while their husbands earn their living at home is a source of never-ending wonder. Such women are considered fair game for gallantry; for the absent husbands Italians feel only indulgent contempt.

Children are the soul of family life. There is no legal divorce, and no man is bound to recognize or support his bastards; but a childless marriage may be legally dissolved in order to permit the two persons involved to try again!

As the child constitutes the real knot that holds the family, so the family itself is the real unit of Italian life. Society exists for the family. Without the family there would be no adequate check on the lawlessness of the individual. Patriotism, morality, religion are conceived in terms of family life. Not by accident is the pure mother, the Virgin, the central figure in Italian catholicism. Jews and Greeks might be satisfied with strict monotheism or theological worship of the Father, the Holy Ghost and the risen Christ: the Italians care less for Christ the God than for the *Bambino Gesù*. The holy Babe, Mary, the tender Mother, even Joseph, the "putative" Father—these soon took the place of the almost metaphysical personages of the Greek church. The most striking entity in the worship of the common people is the Holy Family.

In ordinary life, loyalty means loyalty to one's family and friends, sometimes against other families, as in the *vendetta*, sometimes against an individual interloper. Thus a brother, himself the

seducer of twenty girls, feels called upon to slay his sister's lover—for the honor of the family. Even patriotism is better understood when depicted to the simple people as a form of family defense, when the nation is described as synonymous with the "race" and the blood link insisted upon.

It must now be evident why so many Italians strongly oppose the introduction of legalized divorce. For they argue that in a country that casually accepts irregular sexual relationships, the individual already has sufficient freedom. He can follow his affections and maintain the integrity of his family at the same time. The result of divorce would be to weaken and destroy the family, the one cohesive element in Italian life.

Students of Italian art and letters become speedily aware of the gulf between these subjects and the popular life. Art and letters wear a kind of harsh objectivity—a kind of splendid superficiality—which has, at least since the counter reformation of the sixteenth century, been their most striking characteristic. Art has been increasingly formal, splendidly formal, one must admit, but lacking in intimacy and soul. When the Italian painters turned from Madonnas to goddesses, when poets ceased to believe in the Holy Family, when the Church curtailed speculation, Italian art lost touch with the depths of Italian life. Painting, sculpture, poetry and the new art of music developed in a false atmosphere. The strivings of artists were unable to overcome the empty pomp and falsity of life and succeeded only in palming off sentimentality for sentiment and conventionalized emotion for the soul.

No longer as in the days of Dante or Lorenzo the Magnificent, poets and people lived together and spoke virtually the same tongue. Both suffered from the divorce. Poetry grew stale, the people turned for expression to popular story tellers and old fashioned legends. Artificiality has perhaps been brought to its highest pitch in the empty, sensual, yet consummate art of D'Annunzio, whose writings are unrepresentative of the Italian people even at their worst. Only where modern Italian writers have dared to go to the people and write of life as it is lived have they expressed Italy. Manzoni in *I Promessi Sposi*, Fogazzaro in *Piccolo Mondo Antico*, Giovanni Verga in *Maestro Don Gesualdo* and *I Malavoglia* have expressed their country. Most of the others, D'Annunzio, the sculptors of the new Victor Emanuel monument, the musicians, the innumerable painters have only touched the surface. Academic or futuristic but always rhetorical or insincere, they have molded the crust but forgotten the filling.

Now, a people gets the government, the art and the ideas it deserves and we must admit that the skepticism and passivity of the Italian masses have permitted where they have not encouraged the reign of rhetoricians—poets or statesmen—who pretend that they are the whole country. But their pretense is unfounded. Had it depended on the talkers, the country would never have been formed, never survived fifty years of steady misgovernment, never come through the war.

*Everything in Italian life is better than it seems.* Intellectual life is deeper, as the influence of that

## SOBER DAYLIGHT

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austere philosopher, Benedetto Croce, on a whole generation, can attest. Moral and æsthetic fervor is felt by many who serve in secret and despise the easy rewards of compromise. Beneath the surface rhetoric and corruption exists a group of men who are really making a new Italy. They are the national conscience, the national soul. It is through them that the spirit of nationality is slowly creating a new nation. The real history of modern Italy almost ignores kings and statesmen, alliances, wars, colonies, and knows nothing of the growth of industry and population. There are the shadows cast by events against the light within. The real history is the story of the reawakening soul and this is the story most worth following. For when the multitudes have awakened a little more and the leaders come forth, when suffering and necessity have dried up rhetoric and swept away moral inertia, then Italy will again become the teacher of mankind.

Hers be the task to reconcile nationality and humanity!



## CHAPTER IV

### WHY UNITED ITALY WAS IMPOSSIBLE

The roots of political unity in Italy go back to ancient Rome, but from the moment of Rome's downfall to the awakening during the Napoleonic epoch, the realization of a nation was an impossibility. Six hundred years of equality under Rome had made it impossible for the various provinces and local centers ever to submit to one of themselves; they could only submit to Rome, if submission there was to be. And unity in any but the democratic age meant necessarily submission. Rome, however, was in the hands of the Church that represented all humanity; to bow down to Rome was to betray local feeling in favor of all men, the majority of them alien in speech and customs. In consequence of this situation, the attempts of one conqueror after another to build up a permanent Italian kingdom all foundered. The kingdoms of the Goths, of the Longobards, of the Franks, were one after another opposed by the Church and, dragging down the remnant of the old Roman aristocracy with them, in their downfall left the road clear for that special sort of social democracy represented in Papal omnipotence. The Pope wielded divine power, but any one might become Pope.

After the assimilation of the invading peoples, local liberties proved too strong for any of the

## UNITED ITALY WAS IMPOSSIBLE

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isolated warriors from without, who sought in vain to plant enduring feudalism in the barren soil of Italian individualism. The result was that marvelous flowering of medieval beauty, the Italian communes, each of which, yielding sincere allegiance neither to humanity in the institution of the Church, nor to the State in the guise of the Holy Roman Empire, battled by itself to preserve its independence and constituted in respect to its citizens a true, if embryonic, fatherland. Popes and Emperors in their wars used the communes as pawns, dragging them into the bloodiest of adventures, but without ever succeeding in winning their moral allegiance to one cause or the other. But rapaciously the city states preyed upon one another! In twelfth century Italy, not less than ninety-nine militant cities nursing one hundred and nineteen constant hates can be counted. Nothing could suppress or curb the vitality of these towns, strong in their indomitable civic spirit, wise with long political experience. Against their *podestà*, those strangely chosen foreign executives, against their democratic councils, their stubborn burgher soldiery, despotism and feudal nobility shattered themselves.

Gradually the city states grew. The lesser towns succumbed to the greater and the conquering communes, which foreign tyrants had been unable to subdue, produced despots from their own midst. Within the communes arose the overlordships, the *signorie*. The communes had fought the idea of political amalgamation; the despots revived it, each for himself, and brooded over a possible kingship;

certain of them tried even to realize the dream.

Italian splendor grew from the soil of disunion, but its flower was political ruin. The wealth of Venice alone surpassed that of the rest of Europe. Riches and pacifism were always dangerous companions. The Italians, grown too civilized to fight, were soon to pay dearly for their trust in mercenaries. France, Germany, Spain, then rising as nations, comparatively poor yet founded on social discipline, feudalism and military prowess, were looking on greedily at this carnival of wealth, art, beauty, learning, pleasure. Italy, to oppose their national armies, would have had to form a nation and an army of her own. Yet the very absence of military slavery, which made her civilization possible, made it impossible to defend. Her citizens were helpless, her mercenaries could be bought.

Italy, which up to this time had drawn the world behind her, could go no farther. After freeing herself from Empire and Papacy, wearing them down and subordinating them to the needs of her own history, she was still able to discover America through Columbus, the printing press through Castoldi, the experimental method through Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci; she could give a model to historians through Guicciardini, a political codex through Machiavelli, the satire of the entire Middle Ages through Ariosto; could renew Dante through Michelangelo; could assure later astronomical revelations through Galileo; could create an entire people of artists and statues; could resuscitate antiquity through learning; improvise a social elegance superior to that of the Greeks; shine with knowledge and with skepticism, with riches and with thought—but she could no longer guide European history.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oriani, "La Vita Politica in Italia" *La Voce*, Rome.

The country sank and sank, consoled by no voice save that of its music. The ancient traditions became dim memories. The indomitable spirit of the communes, the magnificence of the *signorie*—artistic and literary primacy, all had passed to the conquerors. Manliness, virtue, talent, seemed dead. The south groaned under the rapacity of the Bourbons. Sicily, handed like a succulent dish from Spain to Savoy and back to Naples, was a sink of misfortune. The Papal government, forgetting its former rôle of protector of the weak, stooped to reaction and, passing into the hands of the Jesuits, maintained their power throughout Europe against every form of liberty and enlightenment. But the Jesuits were faithful to their cause, and fought *ad majoram Dei gloriam* as none had fought since Gregory. In their fall they carried down the last shield of the Church militant. Under Pius VI the Church became a simple Italian principality, always more or less under the thumb of Austria. Genoa, haughty republican rival of Venice, still retained the mask of independence. But after the revolt of Corsica, the Republic could think of nothing nobler than to sell the island to France and herself passed into decline.

A year after the sale of Corsica Napoleon Bonaparte was born at Ajaccio. Little of history is, therefore, more important than that miserable sale of the island. For curiously enough Italy, unable to offer even decent resistance with her own soldiers, supplied foreign countries with their best generals. Thanks to Bonaparte the spirit of the French revolution spread over Europe. The first

to profit by the revolutionary spirit was Italy. But at the beginning her people were afraid. "The catastrophes and immense wars which France waged on account of the revolution terrified the (Italian) people." The few Italian Republicans urged war on the side of France and later against Napoleon's tyranny. The people, still divided, emasculated by princely corruption, wanted nothing so much as peace. Yet a few years later these same indolent Italians, conscripted into Napoleon's grand army, showed what splendid military virtue they possessed. Later too these veterans played an important part in every national rising.

The Cisalpine Republic of Napoleon laid the foundation for modern Italy. But greater than any merely political construction was the moral teaching of the French Revolution. Not only did it destroy the doctrine of legitimacy, the divine right of kings, but it contained, greater than princes or potentates, so insidious that it overthrew Napoleon himself, a mighty force, the principle of nationality.

Unfortunately for Italy, this principle, planted with Republican fervor, took decades to grow. Few in Italy were quick to feel the spirit of national unity. "Rome alone could have silenced regionalism." To this point the history of Italy returns again and again; against such a fact Italian aspirations could break only to recoil. For after 1815 Rome was again the city of the Popes, international, or rather antinational. Without Rome, it cannot too often be said, unity as a democracy was impossible; the apathetic masses, incapable of becoming a

truly self-governing nation with no shrine save in the hearts of its citizens, preferred a human symbol, a master to serve, a king to reverence. Such a sovereign was sought and eventually found in the sovereigns of the least Italian of Italian states, the proud, dull, bigoted, brave and incorruptible princes of the House of Savoy.

Recorded history teaches nothing if not the futility of persecution to stamp out new ideas merely because they are deemed subversive. At the Congress of Vienna the Powers, who had been frightened by Napoleon almost into hysterics, tried with desperate zeal to undo the work of the French Revolution. Europe was reconstructed almost as if the Revolution had not been. Founding their decisions on the venerable mystification of the Divine Right of Monarchs, they bartered peoples like herds of cattle and with the Pope's benediction, put them back into the hands of their "legitimate" rulers, however cruel and frivolous these happened to be. But not all the sovereigns, priests, police, and hangmen could prevail over one simple idea whose growth and development have become the nucleus of European history—the right of a people to determine by whom and in what manner they shall be governed.

The conquest of Italian unity and independence showed the strength of the principle, yet never cause seemed at the beginning, in the reactionary Italy of 1815, more hopeless. The forces and conditions working against unity seemed at first sight so strong that all effort was useless.

Let us examine those forces and conditions with



a view to ascertaining why. What they were emerges clearly from an examination of Italy itself.

Napoleon, dying at St. Helena, had prophesied the future unity of Italy. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 reëstablished despotism; a later council affirmed the principle of armed intervention by the Holy Alliance in case any state should be so offensive as to attempt to overthrow its tyrant. Now Italy, as all her past history had shown, could not be united under a native despot and was still less likely to accept one at foreign hands. The principle of intervention amounted, therefore, to a deliberate pledge embodied in the division of the peninsula into eight states.

Piedmont, known officially as the kingdom of Sardinia, consisting of Savoy, Piedmont, Liguria and Sardinia occupied half of northern Italy by the side of Austria who held Lombardy, the Trentino, Venetia and the Istrian peninsula. Farther south were grouped the duchies, Parma, Modena, Lucca and Tuscany, all more or less subject to the will of Austria. Down the center in an irregular strip from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian Seas stretched the Papal States, Romagna, the Marches, Umbria and Latium. The south of the peninsula with the Island of Sicily formed the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, in extent the largest state in Italy now restored to the insufferable Bourbons, whom Austrian arms helped to keep on their thrones.

Everywhere the common people welcomed the return of their tyrants with enthusiasm, so little did they care for French occupation or the ideals the Revolution embodied.

## PIEDMONT

Of the Italian States the only one that managed to keep clear of Austrian interference was Piedmont, so that from the first it seemed marked out as a nucleus for the nation. Its peculiar history too, endowing it with so many virtues foreign to the rest of Italy, rendered it apt for a special part in history. But the future of Italy and the democratic ideal were inseparable, whereas Piedmont was a rock of conservatism. Origins, language, customs were not Italian but French. In the magnificence of Medieval and Renaissance Italy the Piedmontese had taken no part. A nation of mountaineers and peasant warriors they had had little but armed contact with their neighbors. They were lacking in civilized gifts and uninspired. But they possessed courage, intense patriotism and a kind of moral solidity, while their rulers, in all other respects stupid autocrats, showed a genius for political duplicity which placed them among the best diplomats of the time.

There is little glory in the history of Piedmont but innumerable examples of the most preposterous audacity and a steady demonstration of fidelity to the State and the dynasty which contrasts most favorably with that of other Italian regions.

The Napoleonic epic, with its leash of gigantic material and moral forces, any one of which dwarfed Piedmont to insignificance, marked a necessary halt in Piedmontese history. Yet the delegates at the Congress of Vienna, confident of finding sure allies against liberty in her dull bigoted princes, conserv-

ative nobility and stubborn people, not only revived Piedmont but added to her domains the republic of Genoa, which she had been powerless to conquer by force of arms.

Superficially, of all the Italians the Piedmontese seemed the most adapted to the schemes of Metternich against Italian unity and independence. Their very patriotism seemed to isolate them from the other Italians, whom they appeared too unimaginative to unite by friendship and too weak to conquer by force. Italy, opposed by the Pope and by Austria, could only unite around the two forces strong enough to offset the moral strength of the one and the tyranny of the other, namely the House of Savoy and the Piedmontese army.

And never was material less promising.

Victor Emmanuel I, the dull tyrant whom the Congress of Vienna reëstablished, Charles Felix, his successor (in Italian *Carlo Felice*) immediately and with justice nicknamed *Carlo Feroce* (the ferocious), so cruel were his measures of repression, Charles Albert, surnamed King Wobble (*Re Tentenna*), though of better stuff than his predecessors—such kings were worth little for the national cause. Only the advent of Victor Emmanuel II, monarch of a different temper, made possible the establishment of Italian unity. With the advent of this brave yet all imperfect man, authority had passed from the sovereign to the ministers. Henceforth the king of Sardinia, so soon to be king of Italy, was largely a figure head. The real power lay almost entirely in the hands of a politician of genius, Camillo Benso di Cavour.

### GENOA

Long before the Napoleonic epic brought about the downfall of the Italian states, the noble and ancient Republic of Genoa, birthplace of Christopher Columbus, had become a husk. Yet the common people, democratic and turbulent, clannish and commercial, clung desperately to the forms of their former liberty. During the struggle against Napoleon, Lord William Bentinck had, in the name of Great Britain, promised the city independence. But this was only a trick. The Czar told the Genoese that "republics were no longer fashionable" and consigned the proud and helpless citizens to the dominion of reactionary Piedmont. For decades the democratic citizens, who for centuries had laughed at Piedmontese ambitions, chafed under what they considered the worst possible bondage. Even later, when a few middle-class liberals had come to look upon union with Piedmont as a step toward the unity of all Italy, the aristocracy and the workers still resented Piedmontese rule.

### THE AUSTRIAN PROVINCES

Across the River Ticino to the east of Piedmont, to the north of the River Po, lay the three Italian provinces upon which Austria had placed her paw, Lombardy, Venetia and the Trentino. From here the Austrian bureaucracy reached out to stifle liberty, strangle independence and shatter national consciousness throughout the rest of the peninsula. Austrian petted and protected absolutism in the Duchies, shielded Vatican obscurantism and ecclesi-

astical corruption in the Papal States, screened the inept and criminal Bourbons of Naples from the violence of the all too patient subjects. In her own provinces, in Venetia, the Trentino and especially in Lombardy, she governed with the cruel precision and logic that seem the peculiar prerogatives of Middle European bureaucracy.

Lombardy had risen during the Renaissance to a position of predominance. But the triumph of the Visconti and the Sforza was followed by invasions by the French and Spanish and two centuries later Lombardy passed under the control of Austria. Yet the advent of Napoleon showed that the Lombards had not altogether lost the qualities which once had made them great. "As the chief city of the Cisalpine Republic and afterwards of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, Milan became a brilliant European capital, the first city in Italy, in literature, industry and social enterprise. Lombard engineers built the Simplon Pass, Lombard architects completed the Cathedral of Milan, Lombard soldiers shared in the glories of Napoleon's campaign; Monti and Foscolo made Lombard literature known throughout Europe."

The Trentino, consisting of the broad mountainous valley of the Adige, had been at one time thoroughly Romanized, but during the Roman decadence had become subject to German invaders, who reached even as far as Verona on the Venetian plains. Finally the territories crystallized into the two autonomous bishoprics of Trent and Brixen, which (under Austrian protection), despite the menace of the German counts of the Tyrol, lasted almost

to modern times. Geographically both bishoprics lie south of the Alpine watershed and form part of Italy. But the population, overwhelmingly Italian in the bishopric of Trent, is not less German in the bishopric of Brixen.

Napoleon cut short all discussion by annexing both bishoprics almost as far north as the watershed to the Italian Kingdom of Eugene Beauharnais. But the decisions of 1818 confirmed the never clearly defined Austrian claims. Since that date the Trentino has almost ceased to play a part in Italian history. But from Trent southwards the population has remained none the less solidly Italian.

The territories of the Venetian Republic, which at one time absorbed more than half of Lombardy, with Venetia, Istria and Dalmatia as well, also fell to Austria in 1815. Venice herself had become so complete a nonentity, a city of pleasure drowsing in the lagoons, that not even the republic-forming maniacs of the French Revolution had considered her worth saving. The inhabitants of Venetia, less brilliantly equipped for modern civilization than the neighboring Lombards, were less restive under Austrian rule and consequently escaped some of the political persecutions which so embittered their neighbors. Except along the coast, the Italian character of Istria and Dalmatia all but disappeared. Dalmatia had never been truly Italian; the Italians of Istria slowly succumbed to the advancing Slavs. The population of Venice itself, sunk in the depths of apathy, appeared destined to serfdom. The manlier peoples of the countryside were paralyzed by lack of military tradition and by religious bigotry.



Considered in its administration, the Austrian government in Lombardy and Venetia was the best in Italy. German bureaucracy had its drawbacks, but it was efficient, comparatively honest and, except for political offenders, rigorously just in its applications of its laws. Science was encouraged, industries were protected, the censorship, formidable in theory, was in practice the lightest in Italy. The formal complaints of Italians were only three: the substitution of Austrian civil servants for Italian; taxes twice as heavy as in the other Austrian provinces; and the expenditure of fifty per cent of the money so collected outside Italy. But in reality this comparatively equitable administration concealed in its sleeve a political dagger—complete Germanization—against which Lombards and Venetians alike were prepared to struggle to the death. “You Lombards must forget that you are Italians!” This injunction, variously attributed to the Emperor Francis II of Austria and to his minister Metternich, but faithful to the spirit of both, is the key alike to Austrian oppression and to Italian resistance.

The very benevolence of the Austrian rule with its aim of denaturalization made it hateful to the patriots. Yet in 1838 Emperor Ferdinand of Austria was crowned at Milan amid popular rejoicing so great that foreigners were amazed and the few patriots humiliated.

It was evident that left to themselves, Piedmontese, Lombards and Venetians could never be a match for the disciplined masses of Austrians. Only an all-Italian rising wherein South and North would have vied with each other in zeal, could have

rid the country of foreign tyranny without foreign aid. But such a rising, the dream of Mazzini, was impossible. It would have meant the sacrifice of Piedmont to the national cause, and this the Piedmontese, from Cavour down, would never accept. It would have meant the overthrow of the House of Savoy with the rest of the Italian princelings, and to this the aristocracy would have preferred Austrian domination. And it would have required an effort and an abnegation of which the Italian people were incapable. Among the thousands who emigrated and who remained, Austrian tyranny alone kept alight the flame of independence in an old and apathetic race, and thus by its excesses, indirectly prepared its own downfall.

#### THE DUCHIES OF THE CENTER

The three small Duchies of Parma-Piacenza, Modena and Lucca, merit special consideration if only because they epitomized the all but hopeless weakness of all Italy. The rulers of Modena and the Duchess of Parma, Napoleon's widow, were Austrians by birth and sympathies—Austrian soldiers protected the former, while the town of Piacenza was permanently garrisoned by the white-uniformed foreigners.

The Modenese dukes and the Dukes of Lucca were rivals in tyranny the more idiotic for the insignificance of their domains. Duke Francis IV, who throned it over the half million inhabitants of Modena, was a sincere conservative resolved to save society from the excesses of liberalism, whose exponents at that time sinned in his eyes by their per-

sistency in wearing beards and demanding a constitution.

The rulers of Parma have been so nicely immortalized by Stendhal in *La Chartreuse de Parme* that the curious had best refer to that excellent work.

Lucca, the tiniest Duchy of all, had a strange history. Duke Charles Louis, an eccentric sensualist, made his Yorkshire groom, Thomas Ward, first, ambassador to Vienna, then prime minister and proprietor of all the mines. Ward turned out to have some administrative ability. Later, after an experiment in Protestantism, Charles Louis, re-become a Catholic, and fearing revolution, sold his Duchy to the grand Dukes of Tuscany and abdicated. But the death of Maria Louisa of Parma in 1847 left him Duke of Parma, whence the rebellion of 1848 drove him headlong. Restored the same year, he copied his neighbor, Francis V of Modena, and installed the Austrians everywhere as protectors. Under his son, Charles III, martial law was declared, the universities closed, lawyers and magistrates compelled to shave their beards and mustaches and wear their hair short. Three hundred persons were publicly whipped in the first months of restoration. An assassin thoughtfully undertook to rid the world of this picturesque pest but his widow proved even worse, so bad indeed that she became known as Nero in petticoats.

Yet great as was the need for political solidarity, the first act of the rebellious Piacentines in 1848 was to cut themselves free from Parma and organize a separate provisional government.

Revolt itself was half hearted and sluggish.

Stendhal has stated the case of the little Duchies accurately when he writes that "absolute power is convenient in that it sanctifies everything in the eyes of the people."

The duchy of Tuscany, in the size and shape with which it comes into our story, was outlined at an early date. After 1559 it hardly changed, although it was not until nearly two centuries later that John Gaston, last of the native House of Medici, ceded the dukedom to Don Carlos of Bourbon whence it passed to Austrian princes of the House of Lorraine. And with all their faults the Tuscan grand dukes rank as the best rulers of their day in the unfortunate peninsula.

The weakness of Tuscany lay not in the character or nationality of its rulers so much as in the general lack of energy of the inhabitants.

Education was insufficient; economic and moral mediocrity had eaten away men's courage and will to sacrifice. Military tradition had been lacking from the time of Machiavelli; small wonder that there remained "no stuff for great deeds." Want of moral energy was universal. The aristocracy played at gallantry. The common people, excepting the university students of Pisa and Siena and the sailors of Leghorn, were too mild to contemplate revolutionary violence. The peasants were prosperous enough to be conservative, not rich enough to be enlightened. They were largely instrumental in causing the failure of the uprising of 1848-1849. "It required little effort for the clergy and country gentry to unite them to a crusade against a govern-

ment which not only banished the Grand Duke and watched the priests but threatened to tax themselves and send their sons to fight for such a far-off thing as Italian independence." Liberal Tuscany, therefore, despite the brilliance of its inhabitants, the democratic traditions of its cities, proved less capable of sacrifice in the national cause than Piedmont, Rome or Naples.

Not less detrimental than Tuscan lack of character was local jealousy, or what Italians call the "belfry spirit," which made united action all but impossible and caused the Tuscans, once republican unity was seen to be impossible, to oppose the Monarchy and the Piedmontese kings. The ancient feuds between the cities, the hates of Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Siena, Leghorn, which had survived the days of the communes, were far from extinct. And though Florence in a burst of friendly feeling sent back the harbor chains of Pisa which had been captured centuries before, Leghorn rose against Florence. Tuscany, unmoved in 1821, barely stirred in 1831, and allowed the successful revolution of 1848-1849 to be overturned almost without a blow being struck to defend it.

"The majority, who had applauded the revolution when it meant processions and demonstrations, turned away when it called for sacrifice."

#### ROME AND THE PAPAL STATES

Since the days of Ambrose, bishop of Milan (340-397), the Roman church has claimed and in part exercised spiritual power over the sovereigns of this world. Never sincerely abandoning this position,



the Princes of the Church have constantly affirmed their transcendent and, in theory, universal authority. Papal pretensions were from the first catholic, that is, supernational. Papal activities have been correspondingly international. In its diverse but no less grandiose manner the Papacy prolonged the tradition of the empire of the Cæsars, while claiming in addition to possess the keys to the city of God, it, too, cosmopolitan. At no time, therefore, could the political action of the Church escape contrast with any specifically Italian claims. Italian patriotism meant to the popes the intolerable rebellion of a lesser idea against a greater. Not unnaturally then, in defending the greater idea, they did not hesitate when necessary to call in foreign aid. There cannot be the slightest doubt but that the presence of the popes in Rome was the strongest influence in keeping Italy divided.

Nevertheless, their presence was for many centuries a source of benefit. The Church defeated yet at the ninth hour preserved what was left of ancient culture and this culture, hidden away 800 years in the monasteries, came forth to adorn the Renaissance. During these centuries the Church protected the common people of Italy against kings and nobles, while cardinals and prelates, themselves often of humble origin, were a mighty force for good. During the Renaissance the very vanity and worldliness of the pontiffs worked for the splendor of learning and the arts. Italians generally, so far from resenting, were extremely proud of the spiritual primacy the presence of the popes imparted to the entire nation. Only after the coming of the



Spaniards, after the schism of Luther had thoroughly terrified the prelates, the Church, fearing for its very existence threw itself into that movement known as the Catholic Reaction, strong with the zeal of the Jesuits and the borrowed glory of the kings. For since Protestantism had given irresistible impetus to democracy, the Catholic Church in its fight against Protestantism inevitably took the side of absolutism.

The pontiffs declared against chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, magnetism, steam, scientific medicine, railroads. They punished or opposed Campanella, Bruno, Bacon, Pascal, Locke, Kant, Copernicus, Galileo, Buffon, Cuvier, Gibbon, Machiavelli, Sarpi, Hume, Sismondi, La Fontaine, Milton, Alfieri, Victor Hugo—as in our own day they have indexed the works of so gentle a spirit as Maurice Maeterlinck.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Church in the nineteenth century arraigned in Italy against the dominant ideas, democracy and nationality, whose conjunction permitted the formation of Italian unity and independence.

Had the Church remained truly independent, the struggle with Italian claims would have seemed more reasonable. But for a full century the popes had ceased to be independent spiritual or material sovereigns. Several of the Great Powers held a right of veto over the Papal election and paid for this privilege by defending the Church on the material plane against its own subjects. Moreover, linked to the Powers of the Holy Alliance the Church was necessarily bound hand and soul to reaction and

its political attitude, unlike that of a purely secular state, could not in all seemliness change from year to year. To the European sovereigns of 1815 "a liberal pope was an impossibility" and the Church was merely "part of the machinery for keeping things quiet." In order to fulfill this rôle the Church, therefore, had need of the borrowed bayonets of the sovereigns, of its own paid mercenaries, and of the Catholic volunteers who flocked to its defense from all over Europe.

Not all friends of the Church, however, were against Italian unity.

The situation of the popes was naturally extremely difficult, but they handled it in such a way as to discredit themselves. For they could not bring themselves to renounce political action on the material plane and held to the temporal power as a guarantee of their independence. At the same time such political action, consciously or not, obeyed the anti-Italian scheme of Metternich. Papal rule had grown to lack purpose; its very violence and reaction were futile against the national sentiment of a people. Pius IX was sincere and stubbornly clung to his belief: "Those who are trying to destroy the Temporal Power have for their object the entire overthrow of our holy religion." When it became evident to the patriots that the Papacy would not compromise, and would hold the temporal power if necessary against Italian unity, the temporal power had to go.

As princes the popes were among the worst in Italy. The very condition of the pontifical lands was an argument in favor of a change of government. The Papal States comprised roughly what is now

Latium, Umbria, the Marches and Romagna and had in 1827 a sparse population of approximately 2,500,000. The government was an incompetent theocracy. "Vanity, money, fear, have ruled this country for several centuries," a prelate remarked.

At the head was the Pope, God's vicar on earth, tending to absorb ever more authority into his own person. Beneath the Pope the College of Cardinals still wielded great power. "A cardinal," said Pellegriano Rossi, a papal minister of state, "is a prince at Rome, a pasha in the provinces."

Administration, education, trade, agriculture, transportation, reflected the prevailing obscurantism. The ecclesiastical courts decided cases of church property, sexual immorality and blasphemy, and the sentences trod the extreme limits of barbarism. The Inquisition, still alive, occasionally found scope for its talents. In 1828 Cardinal Giustiniani at Imola condemned blasphemers to have their tongues pierced. A citizen of Fermo was tortured to death for the same crime and a Jewish child was secretly baptized and stolen from its parents. The incredibly brutal conduct of the Papal troops at Perugia, where on June 20, 1859, Colonel Schmidt and his Swiss mercenaries "made an example of the city," only contrasted the more unpleasantly with their behavior in the face of the gangs of brigands who infested Papal territory and often beat the soldiers sent against them.

Practically the police ruled under an aristocracy of prelates, "unchangeable, inaccessible, impeccable." These princes of the Church carried on with all the pomp and expense of the fifteenth century, oblivious

to the shrinkage of the Papal revenues. So bad did the financial situation become that Tosti, minister under Gregory XVI, contracted for a loan from the Rothschilds at thirty-five per cent interest.<sup>2</sup> Smuggling and graft reduced the revenues to a minimum.

Education excluded everything modern. Trade was small, industry almost nonexistent, agriculture generally poor but increasingly so as one approached the metropolis. Conditions within the city itself are ably described in the Roman Diaries of the historian Gregorovius, who was an eye witness. All Romans either wore "the tonsure, or livery, or rags,"—were in other words either in holy orders, or servingmen to priests or nobles, or scum. Not without reason, Lord Clarendon in 1856 defined Papal government as an "opprobrium for Europe."

With the advent of Pius IX in 1846 the prospect of a more liberal government seemed possible. But he was too weak for such strenuous times and after a reign of only three years he was deposed by his subjects and sought refuge with the King of Naples. During his enforced absence the Romans for the first time in centuries gave evidence of character and fortitude. But Pius in his retreat at Gaeta was conspiring for his restoration, and for the sake of the Papacy and for reaction the Neapolitans, aided by the French who did the real fighting, and the Spaniards, marched on Rome.

To its defense hurried patriots from all parts of the country. Never before in all the long struggle for Italian independence were so many brilliant men gathered together and the brief story of the Roman

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<sup>2</sup> Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity*, vol. i, p. 74.

Republic compares for glory and self-sacrifice with anything in the history of other countries.

During the remaining thirty years of his tenure of the temporal power Pius played the part of a petty tyrant.

Twice the pontiff refused to give up temporal Rome voluntarily in exchange for a position of absolute independence as head of "a free Church," whereby the Catholic hierarchy would be rescued from meddlesome foreign interference and the Catholic religion in Italy would occupy the same position as in the United States. Instead he chose the thorny path of trying to keep his fellow Italians out of their natural and only possible capital and naturally suffered through his effort. When disaster at Wörth finally forced France to withdraw the troops from Rome, the army of Victor Emmanuel entered the city through a breach in the wall at Porta Pia, and Pius IX sullenly withdrew to the medieval fastness of the Vatican (which, with the Palace of the Cancellaria and the papal villa at Castel Gandolfo, was all that remained to him), never again to leave his shrunken dominions.

Whatever the effects on the Church, the pope's attitude caused intense sorrow to the national leaders and unending difficulties to the new kingdom. Rome had been won for Italy but "it was not through the great rising of a people or because Europe and the Papacy had bowed of their own will to the principle of nationality. The accidents of European politics had brought the Italians there; the Temporal Power had fallen because the French War Office was corrupt and its generals incapable. Italy had got her na-



tional metropolis, but no great religious peace signed from the Capitol.”

### NAPLES AND SICILY

The natural paradise of southern Italy with its pleasant life has always undermined and enervated the character of its inhabitants, and rendered them incapable of defense. In consequence the region has fallen an easy prey to one conqueror after another. Each conquering race, softened in time by the same incomparable conditions which were the undoing of its predecessors, has succumbed in turn to a newer and hardier stock. Somewhat we must distinguish between the indolent Neapolitan, the sturdy Abruzzese, and the passionate Sicilian. But without a particle of doubt the history of southern Italy during nearly 2000 years has been from an Italian viewpoint disappointing. These lands, to be sure, so devastating to most of their inhabitants, have yet been fruitful in individual greatness and the names of southern Italians figure large in the history of culture. But it could hardly be expected that in the nineteenth century the people of Naples and Sicily should be a constant or even a potent factor in the national cause. Popular outbreaks and patriotic uprisings were indeed common, but each attempt, the work of individuals, was easily suppressed through lack of general support.

Socially, Sicily was several centuries behind the rest of Europe. Feudalism had been formally abolished in 1812, but it lingered in all but name. The great landlords continued to keep their peasants in a state of abject subjection, using economic persua-



sion where they had before made use of formal law. The rich naturally did nothing to encourage education or social betterment when ignorance and misery were the guarantees of their own affluence. When they could, they put down brigands and *mafiosi* with a refined barbarity that only increased class hatred; on the whole they did nothing. Yet with all their defects, their medieval feelings, their superstition, their ungoverned passions and lust for blood, the Sicilians possessed a native dignity and inner value rare on the continent. It is greatly to their credit that the hatred for the Neapolitan tyrants was greater than the gulf between rich and poor.

Conditions on the continent were little short of hopeless. Five sixths of the population were peasants living in extreme poverty and, except in few localities, practically serfs. There was almost no middle class, only the rich oppressors and the oppressed poor. The rich controlled government administration and aided by the upper clergy strangled every popular movement and stifled every truthful voice. The tax gatherers took what the brigands and the landlords left.

Naples, the capital, was the seat and agent of the worst corruption. Of its population of 300,000 souls, 40,000 were *lazzaroni*, belonging to the submerged and criminal classes. Poor beyond description, ignorant beyond imagination, but not lacking in native cunning, they had already begun to adhere to the dreaded *camorra*, and asked only to be "allowed to live peaceably in vice and crime." For this privilege they were willing to support the government. In the universality and variety of its vice

and crime no city in Italy or indeed in western Europe could vie with Naples.

Over such a population there ruled during the glorious period of Italian *Risorgimento*, a race of monarchs whose equals for ineptitude, malevolence and stupidity are hard to find.

Between 1837-1848, Aquila in the Abruzzi and the towns of Cosenza and Salerno rebelled against the government; the Bandiera brothers of Venice tried to raise a revolution in Calabria, but their plans were betrayed by the British government; Messina, Syracuse and Catania revolted but were quelled with utmost ferocity; Reggio Calabria was actually captured from the government troops by a popular leader of liberal ideas, but he failed to raise the country. Ferdinand was terrified. His kingdom was entirely given over to arrests, robberies, murders and assassinations. Yet while the king persecuted political suspects with ruthless cruelty he made peace with common brigands and signed a formal pact with their most powerful leader, Giosofat Talarico, granting the latter pardon and a pension.

In 1848 the revolution all but succeeded and had the character of the people been stronger, might have changed history. Sicily, true to tradition, was the first to move. Naples followed, and the revolt became general. Ferdinand granted a constitution and amid rejoicing a volunteer corps left for the north to join the Piedmontese in the war against Austria. But such sacrifice was too much for the Neapolitans. The Papal allocation against the war paralyzed the southern Italians. Bigotry and superstition did the rest. The radicals hesitated

and the king had his opportunity. In answer to the liberal cry of liberty and independence, *lazzaroni* in rags and priests filed before the royal palace shouting "Death to the nation!" The king hurried orders to the Neapolitan volunteers not to cross the Po and thanks to his Swiss mercenaries was soon again master of the situation. Naples had definitely proved faithless to the national cause.

The Sicilians who had been able to do nothing for themselves, became, under Garibaldi, valiant soldiers. In the campaign of the famous Thousand superstition was for once on the side of unity. For the South regarded the hero as the ally of God, and while Palermo believed him a descendant of the Holy Virgin Santa Rosalia (!) and a whole convent of nuns insisted on kissing him, Calabria mildly declared him a brother of Christ. Yet the winning of the South was but the most striking example of the power of the national spirit when crystallized in strong and daring men.

In the foregoing I have endeavored to point out the greater weaknesses inherent in the many states of the peninsula. But in addition to these local impediments to unity we must count the disparity of ideas, outlook, custom and temperament among the people.

There seemed little in common between the heavy pain-taking Piedmontese and the light-hearted, idle, dissolute proletarian of Venice or Naples; between the gentle, intelligent Tuscan and the passionate, sullen Sicilian; between the activity and enterprise of Genoa and Lombardy and the dead stagnation of the Comarea (Latium). There

## UNITED ITALY WAS IMPOSSIBLE

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was no common Italian stock; Teuton blood predominated in the North, Greek blood in the Basilicata and Puglia, Arabs and Normans and Spaniards had left their tracks in Sicily, while the old Italic and Etruscan stocks remained, perhaps with little mixture, in Tuscany and Umbria and the Abruzzi.<sup>3</sup>

On internal evidence the unity of Italy seemed hardly more logical than the unity of Europe to-day. But the Italians did possess what Europe lacks, a vague but common tradition running back to ancient Rome; they possessed a common language and, most potent of all at a given moment, the best among them became animated by a national spirit that inspired them to struggle fiercely. Thus striving for nationality these few were able to drag the great mass of the indifferent or hostile with them. In the service of the national principle was not only a historical tendency that placated the dislike and even secured the active aid of foreigners just when this aid was indispensable, but a group of native poets, writers, thinkers, heroes, statesmen, martyrs and military leaders such as Italy has never seen since.

These men, scarce in numbers (they have been calculated at less than five hundred), formed national consciousness, expounded and illustrated patriotism, and bent men and events to the national will.

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<sup>3</sup> Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity*, vol i, p. 74.

## CHAPTER V

### REALIZING THE IMPOSSIBLE

If we apply to Italy the criterion of readiness to sacrifice, we are forced to draw the conclusion that during the years when the country was politically in the making, the Italians did not yet, properly speaking, constitute a nation. Too few of them were imbued with the necessary fire. And, nevertheless, it is certain that "the taunts of Lamartine and Niebuhr that Italy was the land of the dead, were only the expression of foreign spleen and ignorance. The ferment that had produced three revolutions in ten years and the ever-recurring crop of small conspiracies, the patriotism that rose up undiscouraged after each defeat, that sent Italian men to the scaffold and Italian women to widowhood, that for thirteen years toiled and suffered in unquenchable faith, bore testimony to the life that was within."

Economic pressure and business sense were of course on the side of the patriots and this helps to explain why the middle class contributed so largely to the cause of liberty. For with the growth of trade and industry, the division of the peninsula into eight political units, each with its economic frontiers, proved a severe handicap—in precisely the same way as economic frontiers on a larger scale are proving disastrous to the Balkanized Europe of to-day. A cargo of merchandise sent down the River Po from Pavia to the sea had to pass five

customs barriers. Under the French the Northern provinces and especially Lombardy had flourished. Austria effectively checked this prosperity for the benefit of her other territories. Italian trade and industry were deliberately sabotaged in favor of German and Bohemian. The Lombard feeling is expressed in a letter of the time, from the patriot Pecchio to the Englishman Henry Brougham: "So to the loss of our independence you must add that of our social prosperity and in consequence the foreign yoke is not only a crying shame but a calamity."

At this time the "Lombardy-Veneto, with one eighteenth of the area of the Austrian Empire and one seventh of the population, contributed one fourth of the taxes.

Yet the selfish fear of the aristocracy for its privileges, the timidity of the middle classes, the apathy of the masses, only rendered the task of the handful of patriots the more enormous and the more brilliant. How few they were may never perhaps be known. Even the test of arms cannot be trusted, for the Piedmontese regulars fought as a matter of tradition, the officers through attachment to the dynasty, the soldiers through training and discipline. Even the volunteers, the "flower and dregs of society," were not all moved by patriotic motives. It is doubtful if the number of consciously self-sacrificing Italians surpassed a few thousands, and 15,000 has been given as the total number of those who died in battle for Italian unity and independence. Considered, therefore, as the work of a tenuous group, the *Risorgimento* appears as an all but miraculous prodigy.



## PATRIOTIC LITERATURE

Among the more important factors in the formation of the national spirit, and certainly the first in point of time, were the writers.

In a vague way, the origins of political unity, like those of language, go back to thirteenth century Florence and especially to Dante. But the national origins come toward the end of the eighteenth century, and in spirit are closely linked to the coming French Revolution. Victor Alfieri (1749-1803), wrote tragedies on classical subjects which are still good enough to be read and which acted upon readers and spectators through exaltation of heroic qualities. Vincenzo Monti (1754-1828), a somewhat mawkish writer, tore his hair and yearned to die because he could no longer bear to see his country's ruin. Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827), a true poet and creator of the "first interior world since Dante," was born in the Greek islands, fought in the Napoleonic wars, conspired generally, held the chair of Italian Eloquence at the University of Pavia, was condemned and fled to Switzerland, and died an exile in England. Much of his work bears the burden of national unrest, and although he was too great a poet to write mere patriotic verse, he could not escape from the universal preoccupation that was really the germinating sense of nationality. He dedicated much of his life to Italy, "once a queen, now, naked and a slave," alive only to abomination and infamy.

Joseph Giusti, the satyrist; Goffredo Mameli, killed in battle for the Roman Republic and author of Italy's most popular patriotic song; Carlo Dall

'Ongaro; the poets Aleardi, Prati and Niccolini; the song makers Verdi and Rossini, whose operas on historic librettos roused the passions of great audiences; Silvio Pellico, author of *My Prisons*, whom the Austrians condemned to the Spielberg fortress—these all contributed something to the awakening of national feeling. But more important than they were the exponents of literary and political romanticism. John Berchet and Gabriel Rossetti, father of the English poet, represented revolutionary romanticism. But in Italy romanticism took a path of its own and we find the Imperial Austrian Government at Milan pitting a classicism derived from the French Revolution against the religiously conservative romanticism of the patriots. Alessandro Manzoni, the greatest Italian romantic and Catholic writer of the nineteenth century, exerted, in his quiet way, a tremendous influence. Although Manzoni's religious quietism prevented him from taking an active part in the national movement, his religious fervor was common to the more rebellious spirits and best minds of the day.

Only such religious conviction can explain the constant appeal to authority made by men who were patriots and, as such, potentially rebels. In 1843, Cæsar Balbo, a historian of some worth, published *The Hopes of Italy*, wherein he appealed to the Piedmontese kings to "make Italy" by placing themselves at the head of the national movement.

Among Catholics who suffered at the equivocal position of the popes as petty Italian despots, was the priest, Vincenzo Gioberti. The Church, Gioberti thought, was an enemy of Italy only so long as it

remained obscurantist and attached to its petty territories. But if a great pope were to arise who would throw himself into the fight on the side of the nation he might achieve national union and independence in one great federation under his own ægis. The idea was vast and Gioberti gave it full expression in a volume called *The Moral and Civil Primacy of the Italians*, published in 1843. But there was no pontiff to fill the part.

Not even Joseph Mazzini, the guiding genius of modern Italy, escaped this religious romanticism. And though he repulsed the Church as a degenerate institution, his religious nature pitted against it the conception of the Third Rome—afterwards to be shared by Garibaldi—the Rome of moral patriots which he hoped might succeed to the Rome of the popes as that had supplanted the Rome of the Cæsars. Mazzini's writings are, however, so closely blended with his life as a patriot, conspirator and prophet, that we can best consider them at a later moment.

In about thirty years (1815–1845), the Italian idea grew from a pious prophecy to a common conception. It utterly pervaded literature and in the entire period we find only one writer of first rank, Giacomo Leopardi, in whom patriotism was not an obsession. From books and poems the idea spread to reviews and newspapers. It passed into songs, it filled men's minds, it crept into their conversation and slowly, under the influence of other factors, it began to filter into their deeds. Little by little there came into being in a few individuals a readiness for patriotic sacrifice.

### THE PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES

The earliest patriotic society of the *Carbonari* or Good Cousins, appears to have developed from Free Masonry in the days of Napoleon and, during fifteen or twenty years, to have been Free Masonry's most effective political arm. Whether or not the small secret societies which honey-combed the peninsula were affiliated is difficult to know. Certainly they worked more or less together; for the purposes of this short outline all the secret patriotic societies of Italy at this time, *Adelphi*, *Maestri Perfetti*, *Guelph Knights*, etc., are called indiscriminately *Carbonari* and given a share in the glories and failures of the Good Cousins.

The stronghold of the society was Naples. The doctrines, in the midst of much bombast, were scrupulously moral. Based on the assumption that the "Supreme Architect" created men free, they reasoned that there could be no exercise of virtue without freedom, and so aimed at liberty, national independence and union (federalism, not unity). They were also religious. Jesus, they said, was a republican and the first victim of despotism.

The Neapolitan revolution of 1820 was entirely their work.

Three days after Pepe's defeat at Rieti, revolution broke out in Piedmont. The *Carbonari* in Piedmont were strong and supported by many whom Victor Emmanuel I's stupid absolutism disgusted.

Again in 1830, when the French Revolution of July awoke echoing movements in Belgium, Poland and Italy, the *Carbonari* in the Duchies and especially

in the Papal Legations of Romagna, took an active part in the risings. But once more they proved incapable of leading the national movement. They were too timid, too short sighted, too rhetorical. After this second failure men turned from them, seeking something less dramatic, but less empty of results. Such a faith they thought to find in the new society of *Young Italy*.

*Young Italy* was in every way the opposite of the *Carbonari*. The latter was a gradual growth, an offshoot of Free Masonry. The new society was the creation of a single man, Joseph Mazzini. The *Carbonari* were extremely numerous: in 1820 there were three hundred lodges in Naples alone. *Young Italy* had comparatively few adherents. And whereas the *Carbonari* really failed because they were tepid, the members of *Young Italy* were as serious as death and counted among their ranks a chosen band of the finest youth in the land. These were a band of patriots, sworn to sacrifice, moved by indignation at tyranny and national ignominy, impatient for action, ready to lose everything, even life, for the sake of a martyr's crown and the knowledge of dying for freedom. So in its brief career of not over twenty years *Young Italy* showed itself a reservoir of heroes and a school of patriotism for the entire nation.

Its journal, *Young Italy*, was written and printed by Mazzini in exile, but its six numbers, each from one hundred to two hundred pages long, were smuggled into Italy and became the Bibles of a generation, the greatest generation that modern Italy has ever produced.



## REALIZING THE IMPOSSIBLE

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More than any other factor, *Young Italy* prepared the revolutionary outbreak of 1848-1849, which was the finest exploit of the growing nation.

The *National Society* of the Fifties was the creation of Cavour and of Joseph LaFarina. According to Cavour's American biographer, "it was the confirmation from within of Piedmont's claim to Italian hegemony. . . . It gave Cavour the assurance that a large body of Italians would support his national policy. It clinched the Unitarian ideal among the Monarchists and the Monarchical ideal among the Unitarians." Although it never actually amounted to very much, it gathered round Cavour a group of strong men like Daniele Manin, the hero of the siege of Venice, who gave him strength and support, and so prepared the way for a war spirit; and later, when the time came for Piedmont to annex Central Italy, he helped greatly in overcoming the regionalism which might have been fatal to the young country.

### CONSPIRATORS AND REBELS

The number of Italians who suffered that Italy might be free was not large. But in addition to those few thousand who fell in open warfare against the tyrants or the pope, the French or the Austrians, there were many more who suffered punishment or death for conspiracy and rebellion, some of them voluntarily.

Each uprising had its aftermath of victims. The *Carbonari* insurrection of 1820-1821 at Naples cost the lives of the two young officers who led it, Morelli and Salviati. In Piedmont many were exiled. At



Milan the *Carbonari* leaders were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. At Modena, Andreoli was the first of a line of priest martyrs to the national cause.

The *Carbonari* uprising of 1831 cost the life of Ciro Menotti, leader of the Modenese liberals and of many in Romagna; the Papal troops stormed and sacked Cesena and plundered unresisting Forlì.

And then began the list of the Mazzinian martyrs. A plot in Genoa and Savoy in 1833 cost twelve victims, among them Mazzini's close friend, Jacopo Ruffini, who, arrested with a choice of betrayal or death, committed suicide in prison, after writing on the wall in his blood, "I leave my vengeance to the brothers." In these condemnations King Charles Albert "remains the real criminal of one of the worst pages in the history of Piedmont."

During the early forties the insurrections in the South and around Bologna cost many lives. In 1844 occurred the crazy attempt of the Bandiera brothers, Attilio and Emilio, to raise a rebellion in Calabria. They were betrayed and died cheering for Italy; their story, which passed rapidly through the country, moved all hearts. For however hopeless, even ridiculous, their attempt, they had shown that "Italians could die."

The Milanese Tobacco Riots (1848), an outbreak not unlike the Boston Tea Party, caused the death of several citizens and the wounding of some fifty others.

The revolutions of 1848-1849 brought wholesale retribution from the tyrants. In their own provinces the Austrians butchered hundreds and at

Bologna, in the Papal territory, they executed Ugo Bassi, Garibaldi's chaplain, a fugitive from the Roman Republic. In the Duchies the rulers let themselves go, while in the South not less than 40,000 were condemned by the incorrigible Ferdinand II.

In 1852 two Mazzinian plots in Lombardy cost the lives of twenty-nine liberals, five of whom belonged to the famous "martyrs of Belfiore."

In 1857 Charles Pisacane, a Neapolitan duke and Mazzinian republican, successfully seized the steamship *Cagliari* and, landing in the Kingdom of Naples, attempted to raise a rebellion. He was hunted down and shot and his accomplices in Genoa and Turin were hardly less severely used by Cavour.

Pisacane's failure was "the final blow to Mazzini's influence." For however coldly we may look on Mazzini's critics, many of whom were too cowardly to risk anything for their country, we must admit that the day of conspiracy had passed. Italy, said Manin, had "two living forces, Italian public opinion and the Piedmontese army." The latter was always ready. It was the martyrs and Mazzini who prepared the former and turned Parmese, Modenese, Lombards, Tuscans, Neapolitans and Sicilians into potential Italians.

### JOSEPH MAZZINI

And the third prophet standing by her grave  
Stretched forth his hand and touched her, and her eyes  
Opened as sudden suns in heaven might rise  
And her soul caught from his the faith to save:  
Faith above creeds, faith beyond records, **born**  
Of the pure, naked, fruitful, awful morn.

Thus Swinburne described the work of Mazzini, third in the line of Dante and Michelangelo, whose task was to raise the nation. This pure figure, whose clear light tends ever more to dominate the nineteenth century, was the greatest reality of the Italian *Risorgimento*, a monument of delicacy rich with inexhaustible spiritual strength. Beside him Victor Emmanuel II seems a royal puppet, Camillo Cavour a successful politician, Garibaldi a well-tempered sword in the hands of others. These three men were respectively the outer visage, the brain and the right arm of the awakening nation. Mazzini was the soul. Without him, despite his occasional blindness to facts, his obstinacy in error, they were helpless. He was the incarnation of a new nation.

Born in Genoa, in 1805, he grew up all absorbed in the national problem, with all the Genoese hatred of despotism incarnate in the despised rulers of Piedmont. As a boy he watched the defeated *Carbonari* of the insurrection of 1821 fleeing, after the treason of Charles Albert, from the vengeance of the kings. Native of a republic now held by force of monarchical arms, with the example of the petty tyrants all about him, he naturally grew up an unyielding republican.

At a later age he joined the *Carbonari* and began to write on literature and politics in various newspapers and periodicals. In 1830 he was arrested by the Piedmontese authorities on the charge of complicity in a *Carbonari* plot, and held a prisoner in the fortress of Savona. Brought to trial he could not be convicted for lack of evidence and was given

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his choice of internment or exile. Choosing the latter he made his way to Switzerland and then to France.

At Lyons he came in contact with a force of some 2,000 refugees, who were planning an invasion of Savoy, at that time subject to Piedmont. He eagerly fell in with their plans and when these collapsed he started to join an expedition against French rule in Corsica, where the *Carbonari* were strong. And when this too ended before it had begun, he settled in Marseilles and remained there for three years. During the rest of his life except for brief intervals he was a conspirator and an exile.

The failure of the 1831 rebellion in Italy closed the epoch of the *Carbonari*. Their prestige had disappeared and those who joined them had found revolution "dead sea fruit." Mazzini shared the dissatisfaction. In the prison at Savona he had been allowed to read the Bible, Byron and Tacitus. Out of them and Dante sprang the idea of *Young Italy*. What this society was we have already seen. During Mazzini's residence at Marseilles he worked it out in detail and began to found groups in Italy, gaining as his first recruits the remnants of the scattered *Carbonari*.

His creed was already formed: "God and the People," unity, republic, liberty and independence. The aim of the society was to organize and educate the nation to rebellion, and its members were to proceed without fear, "the almighty God of most politicians."

From Marseilles in 1831 he addressed a letter to

King Charles Albert appealing to him to lead the revolution. Naturally the king took no notice of the irritating letter but Mazzini believed he had evidence that the king read it and that satisfied him. In any case the letter made Mazzini famous. Henceforth "there was no figure of prince, priest or rebel in Italy that could rival that of Mazzini; his popularity became immense. He alone was the object of all discussion, fear and hope."

Even in Piedmont discontent was great and the revolutionary spirit grew greatly. Mazzini hoped to organize a widespread revolt there and in Liguria. He gained many followers among the Piedmontese garrisons and might at one time have had a chance of success. But the Piedmontese government got wind of the conspiracy and took terrible repressive measures. Another raid into Savoy in 1834 under General Ramorino failed and in the same year Mazzini, tracked by the French government, went to Switzerland where he managed to remain two years, though part of the time not wanted. Here he founded a *Young Switzerland* and for a year published a bi-weekly periodical with this name. Shortly after his arrival he and sixteen other exiles, Germans, Italians and Poles, met and founded *Young Europe*, a kind of international alliance intended to crown and complete the national organizations.

Gradually, however, the national movement, especially after the unfortunate fate of the Bandiera brothers, began to slip beyond his control and grow with its own momentum. *Young Italy* was no mere patriotic society but a "creed and an apostolate."

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Its members were taught "reverence for principles" and above all were expected to sacrifice their all to the national cause. But natural economic and political growth was doing its work. Patriotism was gradually working its way into men who were not republicans, who approved the established order of privilege, who had no faith in the people, who saw in the national movement only a local struggle for independence. These later moderates might well be expected to laugh at the man who founded his patriotism on religion and his religion on irrational intuitions and a belief in reincarnation.<sup>1</sup>

Nor were they prepared to follow him in all his theories of nationality. "I am," he wrote, "an Italian, but a man and a European at the same time. I adore *my* native country because I adore *the* native country, *our* liberty because I believe in liberty, *our* rights because I believe in rights."

The later leaders of the Italian movement were drawn almost entirely from the middle classes, men of sound common sense impregnated with skepticism, tender of property rights and the established order; and fatally they tended to fall away from a leader whose standards surpassed their comprehension and whose ideal was revolution. Gioberti had appealed to the Pope, Balbo to the King of Piedmont to lead the national cause: "theirs was an easy creed beside Mazzini's." Nevertheless his own country could not entirely desert him until after the failure of the revolution.

At the beginning, the revolution of 1848 was just

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<sup>1</sup> Bolton King, *The Life of Mazzini*, p. 238.



such a spontaneous popular movement as Mazzini had dreamed. The Duchies rose and expelled their tyrants, the Pope and Ferdinand of Naples granted constitutions and sent armed forces to battle with Austria, Piedmont declared open war, Lombardy and Venetia rebelled, volunteers from all quarters flocked to the Piedmontese standard of Charles Albert, who yielded to the instances of Genoa and Turin, granted a constitution, the *Statuto*, and the movement, even in its most regular manifestations, was frankly revolutionary.

What would have happened if the Austrians had been defeated we cannot even conjecture. The truth is that the Italian people were incapable of a prolonged national effort. Mazzini, "gloriously right in his ideals, marred it all by ignorance of facts." The Italians "were defeated through the feebleness of Charles Albert's generalship and policy and the defection of the Pope and the King of Naples." With this defeat the day of the revolution passed. It was in vain that Mazzini pointed to the Five Days at Milan, the defense of Rome against the French and Venice against the Austrians as examples of what brave men could do unaided. The brave men were all too few; Italy was incapable of the supreme effort needed to free herself unaided from foreign domination or even to carry on a long war that might have ended by drawing allies to her cause. Even Daniele Manin, the leader of that unrivaled siege of Venice which cost Austria the lives of more soldiers than all the battles of the Piedmontese regulars, realized the need of a royal figurehead and of a stable tradition such

as could only be found in the Kings of Piedmont. On the battlefield of Novara, Charles Albert, "King Wobble," redeemed his sins against the national cause by a heroic abdication. Democracy had conquered and the House of Savoy was no longer a brood of tyrants. "The republic became impossible on the day when Victor Emmanuel swore loyalty to the constitution and thereby proclaimed himself champion of Italian aspirations."

It was his moral intensity which made Mazzini's influence irresistible. "Betrayed he cannot betray." His mystic impracticability was a source of strength; he appealed directly to the noble element in mankind, sure of his ground, certain that "only a sense of duty makes men fight through all a generation for a freedom that only their children can enjoy."

Yet his life was a disappointment. He could not realize that his beloved Italian people "could neither understand nor desire the republic." Cavour was right: to free Italy, discipline and the aid of a foreign power were needed and with them a marvelous "sense of the possible" which Cavour alone possessed. So that *Young Italy* was logically succeeded by Cavour's *National Society*, an all embracing organization "for the doubting and half hearted, for the royalist and the catholic, for the courtier and the rich man and the priest; and also for the level headed man of the world." It was not to be compared with *Young Italy* yet it marshalled a host of members and "supplied the common movement with qualities that Mazzini conspicuously lacked."

Yet the moment the Revolution was about to coalesce with the Monarchical tradition it gained a last stupendous victory. Almost unaided by the monarchists the revolutionaries under Garibaldi conquered Sicily and the South for Italy. The first to plan the bold undertaking (which Cavour sought to prevent) was Mazzini.<sup>2</sup>

Try as he might he could not separate his patriotism from his religion. To see his country shrinking from spiritual renewal and forming a new state and a new nationality, monarchical, machiavellian, unredeemed, unconscious of any special historical mission, was the great sorrow of his life. It was not for this he had given his years and his greatness. "Little it matters to me," he wrote later, "that Italy, a territory of so many square leagues, eats its corn and cabbages cheaper; little I care for Rome if a great European initiative is not to issue from it. What I do care for is that Italy shall be great and good, moral and virtuous, that she come to fulfill a mission in the world."

However strongly he believed in nationality—"sacred to me because I see in it the instrument of labor for the good and progress of all men"—he was never a nationalist in the modern sense. For him nations were the individuals of the great human society. Not one nationality, his nationality, the Italian nationality was sacred, but nationality itself. The modern nationalists who struggle that their country may grow rich and powerful at the expense of others owe nothing to Mazzini but much to the German theory of the State. "Countries," Mazzini wrote,

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<sup>2</sup> See letter to Mr. Peter Taylor, dated Feb. 16, 1884, in Bolton King's *Life of Mazzini*. Everyman's Library.

“are the workshops of humanity,” and when “peoples shall have a moral faith in common,” then will disappear “that still too influential nationalism, which hinders the progress of our intellectual life, isolating it from the universal life trembling in the millions of our brothers placed beyond our frontiers.”

### CAMILLO BENSO, COUNT OF CAVOUR

The monarchical party found a great leader in Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, a French-speaking Piedmontese aristocrat with a talent for business and agriculture and a genius for realistic statesmanship. Our opinion of Cavour may vary greatly. We may, with his idolatrous American biographer, Mr. Thayer, consider him the great genius of modern Italy, whose moderation and “sense of the possible” blended with his love of constitutional liberty and unlimited patriotism to make him the indispensable artisan of Italian unity. Or we may see in this strong, somewhat unscrupulous character, with his love of the “just mean,” his middle class mentality, his attachment to the Piedmontese monarchy, the mere “diplomatizer” of the Italian revolution. This was the opinion of many who knew Cavour; among others, Francesco Crispi.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Crispi was the one Mazzinian for whose judgment Mr. Taylor admits his respect, so it is interesting to know Crispi's judgment of Cavour. In a preface to a volume on Guerrazzi and Brofferio, the author, Sig. Ferdinando Martini, relates the following: When Prime Minister of Italy, Crispi, in the presence of Sig. Martini, was asked to name the great factors of the Italian *Risorgimento* and how, in his opinion, they should be classed as to importance, Crispi replied: “Mazzini, Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel. Victor Emmanuel was a great king. He loyally seconded the revolution; by himself he could neither have prepared or guided it. Garibaldi, the cleverest leader who ever came to this world. Mazzini, the foremost, the greatest of all.

Cavour and Mazzini were the bitterest of opponents. Mazzini pitied and rejected Cavour as a "materialist idolator." Cavour despised Mazzini as a "utopian scoundrel" and looked with contempt on his doctrines. If we may believe Mr. Bolton King, Cavour "probably regarded him as a nuisance and would gladly have seen him shot. His (Cavour's) business was to win Italy if he could do so without risking overmuch; but he was minister of a crown and would do nothing to endanger it."<sup>4</sup>

The immense importance of this hostility lies in the fact that Cavour and Mazzini represented rival and valid tendencies in Italian political life which have lasted to this day. Mazzini believed that Italy was destined by God to lead Europe to Humanity. Cavour was well satisfied if Italy by a carefully prepared mixture of war and devious diplomacy could become a nation like the others, a "golden mean," a constitutional monarchy; free, but not too liberal, modern but not too democratic, great if possible in the manner of Great Britain. Needless to say, the Cavourian policy without the greatness prevailed until the European War came to shake the prematurely senile institutions to their foundations.

Had there been no foreign powers interested in keeping Italy enslaved, Mazzini, Garibaldi and the Revolutionaries would probably have succeeded in overturning indigenous rulers and, against the

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In a hundred years historians will call this century the century of Mazzini."

"And Cavour?"

Crispi shrugged his shoulders. "What did Cavour do? Nothing but diplomatize the revolution."

<sup>4</sup> Bolton King, *Life of Mazzini*.



will of the empty-headed aristocracy and timid burghers, in establishing an Italian republic. But with Austria in the North and French troops guarding Rome the problem was far more complicated. Piedmont, the only uncorrupt and moderately democratic native state, with an army of real worth, was indispensable. And this help could only be had at a price. "The Piedmontese had learned the lesson of 1848-1849 very differently from their critic (Mazzini). To them discipline was the one essential. Never again must dissension about means (monarchy or republic) paralyze the country in front of the enemy. Victor Emmanuel must be the figure-head of the movement and the Piedmontese statesmen, its leaders."

This was the policy of Cavour; it became that of Italy because the patriots alone, even with the help of Piedmont, lacked strength to cope with Austria. To drive the white-clad soldiers from Milan and Venice, the aid of a foreign power was necessary. No power in Europe would at this period have aided revolutionaries. France in particular, the dominating power on the continent, would only support a respectable, well-established government and then only for a bribe. Any more radical conduct on the part of Napoleon III would have seemed treason to the world-wide, unwritten alliance of states against their peoples. The timid Italian middle class (with all their faults the strongest in the nation), the business men and land owners and parliamentarians, though utterly useless in the place of the revolutionaries, were indispensable in giving direction, stability and respectability to the movement for independence



and unity. In return for their aid they forced a monarchical, semiconservative form of government upon the new nation. This diplomatizing of the revolution, which secured the aid of France in driving out the Austrians, was the task offered to the statesmanship of Cavour.

As Prime Minister of Piedmont, Cavour had at his disposal the only reliable native army in Italy and at his back the only tolerable dynasty. Under the latter he was determined to unite Italy, or at least North Italy. Concerning the wisdom of annexing Southern Italy with its inferior development he had, it appears, serious doubts. His strength was great enough to rid him of any fear of the lesser princes. But in his own house, in Piedmont as well as throughout the rest of the peninsula, he had to face two strong bodies of opponents, the Mazzinian revolutionaries and the clerical reactionaries. The first held monarchy hateful and resisted Piedmontese hegemony, the second resented Cavour's mild liberalism and his determination to abolish the Temporal Power of the Popes.

Only when he was comparatively independent at home did Cavour plan his attack on Austria. The first step was in forcing Piedmont, against tremendous internal opposition, into the Crimean War, giving as his ostensible reason some fine talk about civilization and the necessity of proving to Europe "that Italy has enough civilized judgment to govern herself in orderly fashion." His real reasons became apparent later. Some 18,000 Piedmontese, "the best soldiers that any Italian state had put into the field since the Napoleonic wars," fought

in Russia. At the ensuing Congress of Paris, Cavour became a world figure and by his sheer personality, in spite of Austrian opposition, succeeded in bringing the Italian question before the world.

It was his opinion that Piedmontese participation in the Crimean War was directly responsible for the Plombières alliance between France and Piedmont two years later—the same which in 1859 led to French intervention and the permanent exit of the Austrians from Lombardy. Whatever the doubt, it seems certain that the Crimean intervention secured for Piedmont an acknowledged position as leader of the Italian cause which could never have been filled by the revolutionaries. Thus Cavour, for whom the national and the Piedmontese cause were inseparable, was thoroughly justified.

The work of the little statesman in holding Napoleon III to his promise and in forcing Austria to declare war on Piedmont after what seemed an aggressive act, constitutes a diplomatic masterpiece. By a sheer force of will the Piedmontese aristocrat impressed his designs on all about him. Not only he overcame the hesitancy of Napoleon, he won over Garibaldi to monarchy, permitting him to organize a corps of volunteers and thus secured the support of a large number of the Party of Action. The combined French and Piedmontese armies beat the Austrians at Magenta and at Solferino, and in six weeks had driven them out of Lombardy. Cavour's plans seemed about to be realized.

Suddenly, frightened by the opposition his anti-Austrian policy was arousing throughout Europe,

Napoleon made peace without so much as consulting his ally. At Villafranca near Verona, destined nearly sixty years later to become the temporary headquarters of American troops in Italy, Napoleon III met the young Emperor Franz Josef and came to terms. Lombardy was to be ceded to Napoleon, who in turn would pass it to Piedmont. Istria, Venetia and the Trentino were to remain in Austrian hands. It was a betrayal of promises, and Cavour knowing well that Napoleon would not hesitate to exact the cession by Piedmont of French-speaking Savoy and Italian Nice, resigned.

Luckily for Italy the other conditions of the Treaty of Villafranca proved to be impossible. The Pope would neither make the suggested reforms nor accept the proposed overlordship of an Italian confederation of the Center. Victor Emmanuel and his new ministers, thoroughly cowed, would do nothing to precipitate a decision. The credit for the annexation of the Central Italian states to Piedmont against the will of most of Europe goes, not to Cavour, who was soon recalled to power, but to Bettino Ricasoli and the Tuscans.

After 1859, whatever his extreme admirers may think, Cavour's rôle in the formation of Italy was secondary. After manfully paying the price of unpopularity subsequent to the cession of Savoy and Nice to France, he would have indefinitely postponed union with the South and even proposed an alliance with the Bourbons of Naples. Fortunately his hand was forced by the revolutionaries who, with Garibaldi's masterful leadership and the organizing

powers of Mazzini's lieutenants, Crispi and Bertani, won a kingdom in a few months. Cavour strove to prevent Garibaldi's departure; then seeing it succeed, used his great power to tame the movement in favor of the Piedmontese dynasty. When in 1861 he died, after a last noble and vain effort to persuade the Pope to accept for catholicism the position of a "free church in a free state," his last words were, "Italy is made—all is safe."

Judged as a statesman—a man whose genius is at the service of a particular state—Cavour was great. His success in winning the entire nation for his semi-French dynasty was almost beyond parallel. His understanding of men was large and—because in so many ways he was one of them—his skill in handling sovereigns, diplomats and wordly men generally surpassed that of any contemporary. Superior to Bismarck in that he achieved success with far less promising material, like Bismarck in the patriotic disinterestedness of his motives, he unfortunately resembled the Iron Chancellor in willingness to adopt trickery and falsehood where they served his purpose. Nor can we admit the claim of a man who overstepped the powers vested in him as Prime Minister of a constitutional monarchy to go down to posterity as "a son of liberty." Compared with Metternich or Napoleon III he was indeed a liberal; compared with Lincoln he was a reactionary.

His superiority to Mazzini lay in his power to see facts as they were and not as he desired them to be. It is his uncontested glory to have been the artificer of the new kingdom.

### JOSEPH GARIBALDI

Before the immense and corrupt inertia of Southern Italy, the valor of the Piedmontese, the diplomacy of Cavour and the plots of Mazzini must have been stopped, had it not been for a sailor from Nice, Giuseppe (Joseph) Garibaldi, one of the great personalities who defy the economic or mass interpretation of history.

Few figures so strangely illustrate national purpose as Garibaldi and rarely have obvious imperfections been so overcome and even used by greater gifts. In a measure Garibaldi's exploits were as remarkable as those of Joan of Arc. With no great intellectual gifts, of mediocre morals, his very generalship, often faulty, full of occasional pettiness, often vain and unreasonable, he nevertheless achieved true greatness. For in moments of need he overcame himself and glowed with intense spiritual fire. For brains he substituted sure and rapid intuitions, a marvelous audacity of imagination and personal courage; his patriotism was unfailing, his belief in democracy deeply rooted. Never did he seek to draw material advantage from his success.

He first met Mazzini in Marseilles in the early Thirties and was easily drawn into the plan for the raid into Liguria. The raid failed. Garibaldi, condemned to death, fled to South America, and entered the struggle for South American liberty against tyrants.

News of 1848 called him suddenly back to Italy and with his wife Anita. Disregarding Mazzini's



advice he offered his services to King Charles Albert—forgetting the death sentence against him—and was given command of the volunteers. But the king, jealous of a possible rival whose name was already famous, kept him all but inactive. Only the Austrian D'Aspre understood what a leader of men this man might become. After the Piedmontese defeat Garibaldi escaped into Switzerland and then made his way rapidly to Rome, where the republic had been proclaimed.

The revolutionaries received him with little fervor and his blunt self-confidence brought him into conflict with Mazzini. But almost immediately he distinguished himself as a fighter. Thanks to his leadership the volunteers repelled the first attack of the French.

When superior numbers finally permitted the French to accomplish the inglorious destruction of the sister republic, Garibaldi united 2000 undaunted spirits and left the city by Saint John's gate. He hoped to raise the Sabine mountaineers and carry on the war. Instead the bigoted peasants turned against him, his force rapidly dissolved and he himself escaped from three pursuing armies only by an epic flight across Central Italy. Tiny San Marino proved true to its liberal, republican tradition by offering sanctuary to Garibaldi's followers. The leader himself pressed on with Anita towards Venice but in the pinewood of Ravenna Anita died in his arms. Leaving her body unburied he turned westward across the peninsula alone, in a land swarming with enemies, always finding protection at the hands of some humble patriot. Finally he reached the



Tyrrhenian Sea in Tuscany and embarked for Liguria. On reaching Piedmontese soil he was immediately arrested, but public opinion prevented his imprisonment.

During the following decade Garibaldi came under the influence of King Victor Emmanuel, and abandoned his republican traditions. Henceforth he fought for the monarchy. He joined the *National Society* of Cavour and La Farina and although he never liked Cavour, he could not altogether resist his ascendancy. Cavour well realized the value of such a recruit and in 1859 intrusted him with the command of the volunteers, restricting their numbers to 3000, however, lest too brilliant achievements should throw royalty into the shade. They had no great part in the fighting but their numbers swelled to 13,000, and they aided in the liberation of Milan. Napoleon III's sudden peace and the confusion of the following months gave the Piedmontese the desired opportunity to discredit him, for in time of peace he closely resembled the legendary bull in the china shop. Luckily for the country's peace Garibaldi just at the time of the cession of Savoy and Nice to France was already engaged in his greatest adventure, the expedition of the Thousand.

During the process of national assimilation the South lay like a great lump of unleavened dough, unresponsive to the metabolic influences which were rapidly transforming the North and Center into a living body. The problem how to win the South had perplexed patriots for a decade. Mazzini with the intuition of genius had first seen that Sicily offered

possibilities. For three years he had urged an expedition. By 1860 the winning of the Center had raised men's hopes. The Island itself, always in smothered revolt against Naples, invited conquest. On April 4, Palermo revolted, and on May 5, 1860 two ships with 1000 odd volunteers finally sailed from Quarto near Genoa. Never was attempt more audacious or likely to fail. The Bourbon soldiers on the Island numbered 23,000 and on the mainland King Francis had 100,000 more. The Neapolitan fleet commanded the sea. Garibaldi had wisely limited the number of the volunteers for if the Sicilians responded to the appeal 1000 men would be enough, while if they were hostile no force at his disposal could prevail.

The expedition succeeded beyond the wildest hopes. In less than a month Garibaldi won the entire island. He had from the first proclaimed himself dictator, and now planned crossing to the mainland and marching on Naples and Rome. But Cavour, ever more tender of the monarchy than of Italian freedom, thought differently. He had opposed the sailing of the Thousand and would not have been displeased if the expedition had failed. Since it succeeded he determined at any cost to discredit the revolution and profit by its success. For if Garibaldi should reach Naples and overthrow the Bourbons he might, despite his fidelity to the king, be led by his lieutenants and a strong popular movement to proclaim the republic; an advance on Rome might plunge Italy into war with France. So Cavour tried to prevent Garibaldi's crossing and meanwhile conspired with the Neapolitan malcontents to

foment a revolution which should in the name of annexation to Piedmont, overthrow the Bourbons before the leader's arrival. In vain. The Neapolitans would not rise. On August 9, Garibaldi's men crossed the Straits of Messina and captured the town of Reggio. In a few days the Bourbon army was completely shattered and disbanded and the Garibaldians advanced and entered Naples, their leader miles ahead of his army in a carriage. Behind in the ranks were representatives of nearly every nation in Europe, the flower of European democracy.

It was a triumphal saunter, not without its humorous side. Cavour's distrust had the excellent effect of causing the Piedmontese troops to snatch Umbria and the Marches from the Papal mercenaries under Lamoricière and this all but induced the Pope to flee from the city. On October 21, 1860, Naples and Sicily voted for annexation to Piedmont. Rather than permit a republic in the South, Cavour was ready for civil war and sent the King at the head of the Piedmontese into Neapolitan territory. Before they arrived the Garibaldians, 20,000 in all, beat 40,000 Bourbon soldiers at the Volturno in what, previous to 1915, might be called "the most brilliant of modern Italian victories." Then, after months of bickering, rather than provoke civil war Garibaldi submitted to seeing himself and his men treated by the Government worse than their Bourbon prisoners, and withdrew to his farm on the island of Caprera.

We may pass quickly over the great leader's first attempt on Papal Rome—which he was determined

to see Italian—ending in his wounding by an Italian bullet and arrest. Yet he, forgetting the bullet of Aspramonte, continued to have faith in his sovereign's word, fighting for Venetia in 1866 and again yielding personal glory and the probable redemption of the Tyrol to the spirit of discipline.

A second attempt on Rome brought him and his sons to within a mile of the city but ended in defeat at Mentana at the hands of the French.

Unquestionably the greatest moral act of his life, and the one least appreciated by foreigners, was the decision of 1870. From France, Italy had had much wrong and little good. Republican France had overthrown the Roman republic in the name of reaction. Imperial France had aided in the liberation of Lombardy only at the price of Nice and Savoy, and had shamelessly betrayed her Piedmontese allies by the Treaty of Villafranca. French soldiers for years stood between Italians and their capital. Yet in 1870 when France, overwhelmed by her monumental incompetence, was struggling for life against Prussia, when the majority of Italians saw only a good opportunity for occupying Rome and the government did so, Garibaldi remembered that French soldiers had died for Italy at Magenta and Solferino. When the French republic was proclaimed he at once offered his services. He and his volunteers were ill received by the French at Tours and came too late and too few to stave off the *débâcle*, but they fought at Dijon and should have been a source of inspiration to the badly led French. Instead the deputies at Bordeaux made them the object of such base calumny that Victor Hugo, who protested in their

favor, was forced to resign. Garibaldi, escaping from the victorious Prussians, swallowed the insults and ingratitude in silence. He had paid the national debt; henceforth the young country was free to follow her own course.

### PIEDMONT AND THE SAVOYARD KINGS

Monarchy might conceivably be the chosen government of nations far in advance of any now encumbering the earth; *hereditary* monarchy in the modern world, with its ignorance of eugenic principles, is only a last resort of privileged classes in maintaining their dominion over the open-mouthed, pop-eyed masses. It is often difficult for modern republicans to understand to what extent men accustomed to slavery and taught to adore tinsel are incapable of desiring or even imagining freedom. The European monarchs had prated of their glories and by-Grace-of-God-ed their subjects so long that many of the latter, like Byron's prisoner, suffered in being liberated from such heavenly forged chains or refused to cast them off altogether. Among the latter was the Italian people.

The Piedmontese kings of the revolutionary period were men of no great distinction; nevertheless, by the grant and rigid maintenance of a constitution, they placed Piedmont at the head of the national cause.

Charles Albert, a royal turn-coat with a priest-ridden conscience, is revered to-day as the king who granted the *Statuto* or constitution and waged in 1848 the first war for national independence. Like all his race he was of great physical courage, though



a poor general. After his crushing defeat at Novara he abdicated in favor of his son Victor Emmanuel.

Victor Emmanuel II made an ignominious peace with Austria, temporarily abandoning Venetia to her fate, but swore fidelity to his father's constitution, thereby permitting Piedmont to evolve and lead the national cause. His first was thus his greatest historical act.

In the official literature of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II is the principal character in the Italian national drama. "Right thinking" historians, in their efforts to impose their hero upon a skeptical people, have brightened all his tinsel, transforming a mediocre but honest monarch into a kind of legendary giant. His virtues have in their hands become heroic, his vices have disappeared, his essentially vulgar temperament with its triteness and conceit has been glorified by servile scholarship and taught to small children, touched up when necessary by the apologist. Victor Emmanuel's effigy in bronze ramps on the public square of nearly every city in Italy and, dazzling in gilt, is the last touch to the cake and tinsel monument which, monstrous in size and whiteness, crowns the historic Capitoline in Rome. Victor Emmanuel's name is bestowed on hundreds of squares, streets, schools, orphan asylums and boy babies. One would imagine that not Mazzini, not Cavour, not Garibaldi but Victor Emmanuel II, the "father of his country" alone plotted, suffered, schemed, fought for and won Italian independence. This miserable apotheosis—the last triumph of the monarchical camouflage that sought desperately to



paint out the towering shadow of the great republicans—has weighed all too heavily upon the blunt brave soldier and honest king and prevented him from getting his honest due. For honest Italians have been keenly conscious of the immense, the comical disparity between the real king and the legendary one. Victor Emmanuel II, we may believe, was a plain, out-of-doors, superstitious, very brave, impulsive, dull yet canny Piedmontese gentleman, generous by temperament and affection, and untrue to his wife—with in short all the virtues and most of the faults of the average man. Neither his personal character nor his personal statesmanship merits attention. The quality which alone fitted him to captain the Italian cause at a difficult period was honest, downright, unwavering patriotism. For patriotic reasons rather than from democratic sympathies he was loyal to the constitution. For the same reason he supported Cavour, whom he disliked; he bowed to the bullying methods of Napoleon III, which irked his royal Piedmontese pride; he conquered his religious scruples and became master of the church both in Piedmont and in Rome. Sincere if mistaken patriotism led him to be unjust to Garibaldi, whom he liked, and to sacrifice his daughter Clotilde in a loveless state marriage to Napoleon III's rake of a brother. In the words of Crispi, Victor Emmanuel loyally seconded the revolution. For this unwavering loyalty something of glory will remain his as long as Italy remains a nation.

Such, briefly, were the larger forces which enabled Italy to become independent. But even

## REALIZING THE IMPOSSIBLE

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after the national organization had been firmly founded the Italian people did not constitute a true nation. Most of them continued to live in the conditions of stupid misery they had known for centuries, indifferent to nation or politics, incapable, therefore, of patriotic sacrifice and unable to imagine such, seeing in the government only a kind of stern parent, to be publicly propitiated and privately plundered.

Italy's immediate future could not, therefore, be very brilliant. The prolonged effort had exhausted the better elements, the self-sacrificing and politically mature handful who had guided the revolution, and the authority dropped into the hands of narrow conservatives who inevitably governed for a class, and of unscrupulous demagogues who governed for lust of power.

National unity existed only on the map. The national spirit was in 1870 as yet unforged. The cities still cherished their ancient rivalries and each citizen was a Florentine or a Neapolitan or a Sicilian before being an Italian. The North looked contemptuously upon the South. Spiritual unity could only be reached through suffering in a common cause, yet for this test of fire the country was to wait forty-five years. Even geographically unity was incomplete. Certain incontestably Italian territories, the lower Trentino, Gorizia and Gradisca, Trieste, Istria and the scattered cities of Dalmatia had been left outside the national border.

The outlook of the young country was necessarily dull, its difficulties immense, its immediate achievements small.

## CHAPTER VI

### UNITED ITALY IS SLOW TO MAKE GOOD

Italy, my Italy, the Italy that I have preached, the Italy of our dreams? Italy the great, the beautiful, the moral Italy of my heart? This medley of opportunists and cowards and Machiavellis, who let themselves be dragged behind the suggestions of the foreigner—I thought to call up the soul of Italy, and I only see its corpse.<sup>1</sup>

Resurgent Italy had been endowed by Mazzini with a historical mission which might have differentiated her from all other nations and conferred upon her a real moral primacy. This was to encourage in the measure of her power and in every locality where practical, the triumph of nationality. Such a mission would have led her to play the part of a paladin in the Balkans among nations already stirred by her example and ready to throw off Turkish rule, to struggle by every means compatible with her national existence for the humble and unrecognized, against the worst tendencies of a brutal age. Such a mission would have been of great aid in the necessary regeneration of the Italian people, by most of whom it would have been thoroughly understood and approved. Without the expense of heavy armaments or the burden of useless colonies or the serfdom of alliance with more powerful neighbors the young and feeble nation could have become

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<sup>1</sup> Mazzini.

a power in the world, loved by the common people everywhere. She might thus have devoted all her slender resources and her energy to the solution of her internal problems, material and moral. After 1870 with France humbled, Germany exhausted and jealous of Austria, Italy might without great danger have followed an independent policy and, skillfully maintaining the European balance of power, have conquered a "great place in Europe."<sup>2</sup>

But neither the Sovereign nor his conservative ministers were able to see the brilliance or the virtue and expediency of such a policy, still less of guiding the Kingdom to an advanced post among world democracies. The Italian statesmen of the Right, strong in finance, practical matters, character and patriotism, lacked imagination. Their most unfortunate failure was not to realize that Italy's vital problems were almost all moral and internal. National unity was, though not complete, yet sufficiently established and the problem of the "unredeemed" might well have waited upon economic, sociological and moral reforms. But Italians have always subordinated sociology and economics to politics, and politics to foreign politics.

Instead of a prosperous moral force Italy has always wished to become a Great Power, an imitation of the others, and from this ambition, which her means and character have not permitted her to realize, have sprung all her keenest disappointments. As in the late Renaissance her architects screened feeble and faulty interior construction behind superb façades, so her shortsighted statesmen since

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<sup>2</sup> Oriani. "La Lotta Politica in Italia," *La Voce*, Rome.

1870 have endeavored to carry out an expansionist rub-a-dub-dub policy behind which they hoped to hide her real weakness. The political humiliations, the fiasco of the colonial undertakings, the scant courtesy shown her at the recent Peace Conference—all rest on these facts: the Italians are comparatively poor, the Italian masses are ignorant and backward, the Italian governing classes are blinded by a screen of rhetoric. Only in the last few years have the common people acquired patriotism.

### ITALY IN 1870

All allowance must be made for the prodigious difficulties facing the young nation at its birth. Just criticism must recognize in the Italian sovereigns and political leaders men at least the equal of those of other countries. But they were faced with a task many times greater: to make a living nation out of a mass of inert poverty-stricken human beings. And so to a great degree they failed. Austrian power in Lombardy had centered in four fortresses known collectively as the Quadrilateral. "The real Quadrilateral," said Pasquale Villari, "is our 17,000,000 illiterates and 5,000,000 do-nothings." More than four-fifths of the total population could, therefore, contribute to the national formation only ignorance and skepticism. The leaders should have turned all their energies to the alleviation of these burdens which, with poverty, crippled every enterprise. But for such a task the modern Italians were completely unfit.

Boldly the first statesmen, the men of the Right, undertook the ordering of State finances and their

success as well as their integrity, merit praise. Thanks to Quintino Sella and his successors, agriculture, commerce, industry, the army, the fleet, schools, banks, postal deposits, railroads, roads, ports, canals and arsenals were improvised. These things the conservatives understood. But their lack of real democracy prevented them from seeing that not ordered government but revolutionary social reform was needed. Fear lest dynasty and unity alike be swept away in a separatist movement had allowed the administration of united Italy to be organized on the French model. Bureaucracy remained, therefore, highly centralized; all distinctive legislation or customs were stripped from the separate provinces upon which were imposed uniform laws, quite regardless of the profound social differences or of the gulf that separated North from South. The lawmakers forgot or ignored the fact that they were dealing with "a country where two stages of civilization coexist in the same state." The police were reorganized on the models of despotism: secret methods were employed, criminal spies were recognized, a "dictionary of suspects" was compiled, all showing "how hard it was for men who had grown up under despotism to govern in the name of free institutions."

Personally, too, the men of united Italy were inferior to those of the preceding generation. "Educated Italy," writes Bolton King, "seemed to have passed suddenly from youth to middle age, to have become serious, skeptical, pessimist. . . . Italy, divided between superstition and indifference, had lost her soul for a time. . . .



"It was this lack of character which made the political life of the country so unreal, the results of liberty so disappointing."<sup>3</sup>

In their effort to restore the State finances, the men of the Right, mostly Northerners, taxed ferociously, but for some reason the burden fell largely upon the poor.<sup>4</sup> Vast and necessary public works were undertaken but nearly all the bids came from the North and many of the fortunes which later as capital were employed in the industrial development of the North were made at public expense. Northern engineers favored the needs of their sections of the country. The railroads there were better planned and more extensive than in the South. Instead of diminishing with time, the difference between North and South increased with every act of the new Government. To Northerners the South seemed a terrible and largely useless burden: the South felt as though it had been conquered by foreigners. Under favoritism the North improved steadily, entered whole-heartedly into modern life and grew rapidly rich. The South remained practically as it was, miserably poor, illiterate, ill-governed, the home of brigandage, organized corruption and ill-concealed feudalism.

### THE SOUTH

Across the path of Italian progress the South lies like a slug. Mentally, morally, socially, economically, physically, it is backward and inert. No government has ever felt equal to the task of its

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<sup>3</sup> Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity*. Nisbit.

<sup>4</sup> Salvemini. "Mazzini," *La Voce*, Rome.

thorough regeneration. Conditions are absurdly, tragically bad, as bad as can be described. Nevertheless, most of the criticism flung at the South by foreigners and Northern Italians is misplaced. The Southerners, say these critics, are poor and backward because they are lazy, shiftless, irresponsible, corrupt and ignorant. Southern Italy, once a garden, could with another population become a garden again. With such people the only possible government was that of the three F's, the government of the Bourbons, government by *farina, festa e forza* (flour, holidays and the hangman). So runs the criticism. Sincere investigation has proved most of it to be ill-founded.

A line drawn across Italy from Civitavecchia on the Tyrrhenian to Ancona on the Adriatic roughly separates the North from the South. The North, with the exception of Liguria, has a climate like that of Central Europe. Southern Italy with Sicily and Sardinia is essentially Mediterranean or, if you like, Balkan in character. Despite the fertility of its chosen spots and the deceptive charm of its orange groves it is in essence a poor country. It possesses few or no natural resources. Over this area rainfall is slight and limited to winter, to the season, that is, when the moisture is of small use to agriculture. Owing to the mountainous topography, water-courses are short and take the form of torrents which, full to overflowing after rain and in the early spring, wash down the little soil which has formed on the bare mountain rocks and then are dry for the rest of the year.

Worse than the climate is the malaria, the Medi-

terranean scourge. This subtle enemy, against whom the ancient Greeks of Sybaris and Paestum fought so unsuccessfully, renders much of the fertile lowlands uninhabitable during summer and autumn. Travelers in Campania, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily are struck by the absence of isolated houses throughout the countryside and the enormous filthy villages perched picturesquely on the hilltops, where, in a swarming mass of children and domestic animals, live the farmers of the surrounding lands. These horrible, overgrown villages are the product of three scourges, over-procreation, brigandage and malaria. Brigandage is rare to-day but the villages are as unchanging as the hills they lie upon. If we seek the ultimate cause of these three scourges we reach a single conclusion: poverty.

Once, to be sure, when inhabitants were scarcer, these lands were not only habitable but real gardens. Poverty occasioned and ignorance permitted the cutting of the giant forests which in ancient days wrapped the mountains. The woods held the soil and allowed intensive agriculture on the slopes; they held the moisture and affected rainfall; they steadied the flow of the streams, they made for springs, and by producing regular watercourses, lessened malaria. Even the Bourbons seem to have understood something of this operation and protected the trees. But the government of modern Italy did nothing to prevent deforestation and to-day the bare sun-baked mountains are practically without value. The economic regeneration of the country will date from the growth of trees. Mountain reservoirs, frequent dams, thick woods, strin-

gent sanitary measures, might again turn Southern Italy into a garden.

To poverty also can be attributed the social conditions. The immense estates are a direct result of poor peasantry, brigandage and malaria. Cultivation of unhealthful or merely distant farms could not be undertaken by peasant proprietors for only the rich and powerful could provide the necessary capital and protection.

Filth and superstition, the prerogatives of all semi-oriental peoples, complete the squalid picture. For, socially, the Southern Italians are largely oriental. Their character, so unpractical, so hopelessly individualistic, corrupted by ages of misgovernment, so unlike that of the hustling North, has been a great barrier to improvement. Northern Italy is middle class, town dwelling in spirit even when it inhabits the country; Southern Italy has only an insignificant middle class to hold the balance between the rich nobles and the very poor. The result was an alliance between the rich and the educated for the further exploitation of the masses.

All Italy suffers from the lack of commercial sense; on the one hand there is a sensitive pride which makes trade largely an affair of emotion, on the other, the desire to become rich by a single deal. This applies almost as much to the North as to the South; Italians, generally, do not conceive of commerce apart from conditions of favoritism or fabulous gain. But in the South there is little commerce, little industry and no sense of honest trade. Southern Italy was and is an agricultural

country. The Italian government long ago checked any tendency to improvement there by imposing a high tariff on foreign manufactured goods—obeying the dictates of the industrial, grain-growing North against the pastoral, fruit and vegetable producing South.

This was perhaps inevitable. Every possible problem was greater than in the South. And whereas the Southerners were inexpressive, the Northerners were clamorous for development, aid, protection. Even to-day, to the North's bitter criticism, the South can reply that "if it is backward politically and socially, it is because the reactionaries of the North have exploited it. . . . The South can prove that financially and economically it has less profit from unity than the North, that it is taxed out of proportion to its wealth. . . . The protectionist policy, while it has had mixed results in the North, has done only evil in the South."<sup>5</sup>

Conditions in isolated Southern villages even to-day are incredibly bad. Poverty has blunted the moral sense; passional crimes are highly esteemed and the foul flower of sexual jealousy encouraged. Animals are not kindly treated. Children, begotten and regarded as a financial asset, are put to work almost like draught animals from the time they can walk. Overpopulation, with the benign approval of the local priest, follows rapidly. The interior of houses is not cleaned from generation to generation. The filth is unimaginable, and in a less benign climate would lead rapidly to exterminatory pestilence. This filth, be it remembered, is due not only to un-

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<sup>5</sup> Bolton King and Thos. Okey, *Italy To-day* pp. 114, 115.



clean habits, social conservatism, bestial instincts and poverty but often to lack of water. Many a village has its single spring or well at the bottom of the hill whereon the houses stand. Certain Calabrian villages have no drinking water at all. The day's supply is brought each day ten or twenty miles by rail, unloaded at the nearest station and carried the remaining distance on the backs of mules, whose rough tracks provide the only access to the village. By this time the fluid has become far too precious to be wasted on the surface of objects or on the bodies of human beings.

In this respect matters have not much changed during fifty years. A Harvard student, the son of a rich landowner in the Puglie, admitted to me that in his own home he had on many occasions washed himself in wine because there was no water to be had; even more frequently he had gone without washing. The cost of supplying certain villages with water is so great that it would in a short time pay for moving the entire communities to some less destitute site. To imagine, however, that such a plan might be realized is to show ignorance of the Southern Italian.

Poverty precludes improvement. The village of Africo in Calabria lies on both sides of a steep ravine through which flows at odd times a mountain torrent. For years, the only connection between the two halves of the village was a kind of bridge formed by a single tree trunk with the bark removed, left in its natural shape, across which men, women and children were accustomed to pass back and forth, seated astride and propelling themselves



with their hands. Not seldom a woman with a baby strapped to her back would lose her hold. A fall on the rocks below was almost always fatal.

Brigandage, formerly general, has in the last few years almost disappeared thanks to the heroic efforts of the Royal Carbineers, a corps of semi-military police. But in Sicily, whatever categorical denials may be made by Italian *chauvinists*, there still linger traces of the *mafia*, a secret organization for crime, based, as any experienced policemen in American cities can testify, on a debased form of chivalry.

Even worse is the better known Neapolitan *camorra*. This is "a vicious, malodorous conspiracy of the dissolute and criminal poor, who live by blackmailing their fellow poor and selling their electoral services to the Government or the local deputies. It has its tariff of blackmail on boatmen, porters, prostitutes, gambling houses; it drives a lucrative trade in unspeakable horrors; it exercises a terrorism at public auctions and takes care that no one bid against its associates."<sup>6</sup>

Since this definition was made, however, the police, at the instigation of the Socialists, did act and between 1907 and 1912 many of the *camorra* chiefs were arrested for complicity in the famous Cuocolo murder. Brought to trial in Viterbo they were condemned and the back of the *camorra* broken at a single blow.<sup>7</sup> But the *camorra* will revive—has already grown strong—and soon, assisted by offi-

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<sup>6</sup> Bolton King and Thomas Okey, *Italy To-day*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting account of the *camorra* and Italian criminal organizations both at home and in the United States see Arthur Train, *Courts, Criminals and the Camorra*." Scribners, 1912.

cials in high places the so-called "kid glove" *camorra*—the organization will once more raise its head.

Why?

Why does this gifted, rapidly progressing country of nearly forty millions suffer one-third of its inhabitants to live and die illiterate, and fully half of them to grow up in conditions of poverty, filth, disease and ignorance?

The answer is simple and discouraging. "Italy," in the words of Francesco Nitti, "is naturally a poor country so that even if it were well-governed it would still be poor." But it has not been well governed. Not only have the taxes occasioned by the maintenance of the army, the mad colonial ventures, the monstrous growth of the bureaucracy, been out of all proportion to the wealth of the country; not only are the taxes so much a matter of class that (in 1901) fifty-four per cent fell on the poor and working classes; worse: the men in power in Italian life have either never understood that the social condition of the country, especially of the South, would necessarily render all great undertakings more or less unavailing, or they have deliberately desired the old conditions to remain, from fear of democracy, or love of corruption, or hopeless skepticism.

The Conservatives of the Seventies thought far more of finance than of social reform. When, before 1880, the Parliamentary Left, composed largely of Southerners, came into power, they thought principally of national prestige as a "Great Power," armies, navies, colonies, "legitimate aspirations," industrial expansion and graft; not of redeeming

and elevating their fellow citizens. In this the North, though an accomplice, can hardly be blamed. Regions, like nations, get the government they deserve. The Northerners demanded good railroads, public works, improvements, protective tariffs—and got them. The masses in the South were inarticulate and demanded nothing.

Nevertheless, the South has made great improvement. More than any other region it has shown that moral and social inequality which characterizes all Italy—a low average out of which emerge like peaks of mountains, individuals of exceptional moral and intellectual power. And the influence of these great individuals has not been unavailing. Overpopulation, moreover, has like fever brought about its own cure. The best of the surplus Italians have emigrated to all parts of the world. Quick to take the imprint of a social environment they have, in more wholesome conditions, absorbed other moral and economic standards. Those who have returned to Italy—at least half the total—have refused to accept the old ways. So in the years immediately preceding the war, the South was changing. The great estates were being divided. But the greatest, perhaps the decisive factor in the education of the South was the European War.

### THE SOUTH CORRUPTS PUBLIC LIFE

Hardly had the South been annexed than the Southerners made a rush for public places, hoping to profit by a situation that had been won for them by better men. These were the men of whom it was

said, "They have made Italy and now are eating it." New Italy was governed by a hungry oligarchy intent on making something out of a situation that they had not been courageous enough to fight for.

For a time the honest limited men of the Right governed with that measure of honesty traditional in Piedmontese political life. To be sure, "national education was the last thought of the new régime,"<sup>8</sup> whose leaders were determined to circumscribe the political life of the nation. But at least these men, the Minghettis and the Sellas, attained a constant moral dignity and their financial reforms, their industrial undertakings and public improvements, deserve praise. Under their system of taxation, however socially pernicious, the public finances grew strong and modern Italy began to be.

Then in 1876 the Parliamentary Left came into Power and with it the South, "the home of all that was unhealthy in public life." With a few noble exceptions the new rulers had never made a single sacrifice for unity, but they knew all the arts of intrigue and corruption. Under them the bureaucracy, becoming the instrument of favoritism and corruption, swelled to monstrous proportions. They were responsible for the tremendous expenditure of public money on gigantic buildings and monuments. The Southern leaders made an unformulated but rigorous pact with Northern capitalists; the former were to govern the country and do as they liked in the sleepy South on condition of giving the Northerners tariff protection and a free

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<sup>8</sup> Salvemini, "Mazzini," *La Voce*, Rome.

hand in the rapidly improving North. Bribery became commoner, constituencies were bought, financial scandals were hushed up, justice was flouted. The chief offender was Agostino Depretis, "a petty irresolute skeptical man with a profound knowledge of human vice and frailty" and to him Italy owes her worst political traditions.

Italian public life, like that of most Latin countries, seems to crystallize more around persons than parties or principles. Of the four political periods between the fall of the Right in 1876 and 1914 three were dominated by a single man. These are roughly: (1) the period of Depretis (1876-1887), who introduced political prostitution; (2) the era of Crispi (1887-1896), who, while superior in morals and intellectual power to his predecessor, proved how ill the internal canker of ignorance harmonized with a "strong policy" and who by his strange mixture of aggressive independence and excessive humility so accurately betrayed the weakness of the contemporary Italian statesman; then (3), after a period of attempted reaction and social adjustment, the period of Giolitti (1903-1914) the boss politician of modern Italy. Under Giolitti, doubly formidable for having added Southern methods to Piedmontese strength of character, all sincere political life disappeared and parties, excepting only the Socialists and a portion of the Clericals, ceased to exist. The "dictator" was a product of the bureaucracy and by using its powers to the full, built up a political machine for graft and electoral manipulation superior to anything the United States can boast.

Deputies who opposed the "dictator" were not reëlected. Giolitti named the provincial prefects and the prefects "made the elections." At one town in the South peasants from the country turned up with their pockets sewed up tightly lest, they explained, the police arrest and imprison them until too late to vote on a trumped-up charge of carrying concealed weapons.<sup>9</sup> Ten years of Giolitti government had by 1914 so demoralized public life that men of character were turning from it with disgust and the younger elements had come to consider the old politician a mortal enemy.

In the absence of the education and leveling up of the social classes universal suffrage, when granted in 1913, merely brought into political life a vast body of ignorance and the bad manners of the bar room. Parliamentary sittings to-day are continually marred and occasionally broken up by unruly deputies who howl, shout, curse, threaten, leave their places and come to blows.

A word of caution is again necessary. The transparency or absence of hypocrisy in Italian public life encourages foreigners to imagine that Italian politicians are more corrupt than those at home. This facile self-righteousness is, in my opinion, misplaced. Individually and in private life the Italian Deputy is probably as honest and certainly as capable and patriotic as the Congressman or Member of Parliament. He may lack the sociological zeal of the American or the conscious virtue of the Briton. But he has never turned national resources over to private pillage so shamelessly as in the

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<sup>9</sup> See Salvemini, "Il Ministro della Mala Vita," *La Voce*, Rome.



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United States and does not, in the British manner, confound commercial privilege and private riches with patriotism and religion. Yet Italian public life does suffer from comparison with that of either Great Britain or the United States. We must suppose, therefore, that if graft and misgovernment are commoner in Italy it is because they reflect a condition of Italian Society. The private ambitions of the governing classes in each country are limited, their public spirit stirred, by the ability of the masses to exert effective criticism and control. This control in Italy is less than in other countries because it requires education in those who use it. The ignorant Italian masses simply do not count. It is not too much to say that practically all the wretchedness in Italian history can be traced to the supine ignorance of the common people, with whose gradual awakening to public consciousness this book is chiefly concerned.

### NATIONALITY AND IRREDENTISM

Persecution and pride have made the Italians patriotic sentimentalists. Historically and scientifically their thinkers evolved and popularized the theory of nationality. Sentiment and theory together produced "Irredentism" or the passion to unite all living Italians with the mother country. This passion carried with it the complementary "right" of men to choose their national allegiance, which was later to become the "self-determination" of Woodrow Wilson. Obviously the exercise of this

“right” is often contested—the refusal of the North to grant it to the South brought on the American Civil War—yet none the less it is the strongest political force of the age.

The theory of nationality can be traced back through the *Carbonari* lodges to the French Revolution and perhaps to some unknown follower of Jean Jacques Rousseau. From the *Carbonari* it passed in Italy to Mazzini, in France to Buchez, who founded the first *Carbonari* Lodge at Paris and taught the doctrine to that Louis Bonaparte who in later years, as emperor of France, served it in the making of Italy.

This theory of nationality, which to Mazzini seemed a self-evident dogma, obtained juridical statement by P. S. Mancini, professor of Law at the University of Turin after 1850. Like its famous forerunner, the “rights of man,” it is by no means a self-evident or logical proposition, but an emotional belief, presuming heavily on acquaintance with the mind of Providence. Just as the “rights of man” theory must start with empty assertion saying God created men free and equal, the theory of nationality presumes the “right” of each group of individuals to choose its own nationality or political adherence. The test is, according to Mancini, the “consciousness of nationality”—thus remaining delightfully absurd and inconclusive, since it would define a word in terms of itself, while on the other hand until such consciousness issues in action—more than likely to be dangerous—it remains ineffective. Mancini, who lived in the timid later days of Italian formation, seems to have been content to stig-

matize as "immoral" any denial of the theory. Since a group has the "right" to choose its nationality, refusal to permit the realization of such a choice is "wrong." Badly founded as such reasoning is, the theory has taken root throughout the world as a kind of mystic belief and, where it is accompanied by willingness to sacrifice, constitutes an all but irresistible political force. In Italy it became known as "Irredentism."

Theoretically, Nice and Corsica which belong to France, British Malta, the Ticino Canton of Switzerland, as well as the Austrian territories of the Trentino (Tyrol), Trieste, Istria and certain Dalmatian cities might have been considered unredeemed Italian lands. Practically, Irredentism could take root only in the Austrian territories because only there were Italians subjected to political pressure. The feeling was accordingly directed solely against Austria. In the Trentino the Italian inhabitants were deliberately sacrificed to the interests of the German elements, around Trieste and in Istria and Dalmatia the Slavs were given full permission to oust the Italians who, even where numerically inferior, occupied superior social positions. This attitude on the part of Austria wounded the Italians keenly and they eagerly entered into their countrymen's brave fight to keep their nationality.

After 1870 nearly all the old Revolutionists had made their peace with the Monarchy and Republicanism has never since that date been a real issue. But there remained a knot of irreconcilables who formed the Republican Party and in the large cities and in Romagna have always found strength to elect

a few deputies. These republicans were the first to raise the cry of Irredentism. In 1878 Garibaldi led a redemption campaign to the slogan of "Trent and Trieste." At Venice a mob all but broke into the Austrian Consulate. These demonstrations were followed by an advance of Austrian troops toward the Italian Eastern frontier. But Italy was too weak to fight Austria alone. During three years, however, the situation remained more or less critical and if Italy had not at the same time been on such bad terms with France there might have been trouble. When finally fear of France became greater than fear of Austria, Italy in 1882 signed the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Crispi, the genius—good or evil—of the Triple Alliance, severely put down all Irredentist manifestations, at the same time secretly encouraging them.<sup>10</sup> Austria continued the most shameful oppression of the unredeemed Italians, notwithstanding the Alliance, while Bismarck made it plain to Crispi that Italy might expect no help from Germany against Austria and that the "road to Berlin passed through Vienna." Gradually Irredentism tended to weaken. At the same time the problem became less one of nationality than one of politics; the later Italian statesmen desired the possession of the Trentino, Trieste and Dalmatia less to redeem the Italians than to obtain strong military frontiers and the commercial and naval domination of the Adriatic.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This is the claim of Mr. Gianfrancesco Guerrazzi, who claims to have evidence in support of it which he is about to publish.

<sup>11</sup> The Italian Green Book and the text of the last Triple Alliance are enough to prove this contention. Fiume, an Italian city, was left out of the Italian claims because not necessary to these ambitions.

Nevertheless the European War showed the Triple Alliance to have been a mere political expedient while the sentiment of Irredentism really burned in the national soul, a deep and abiding factor.

### THE CHURCH AND THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

Most Italians, at their christening and on their deathbeds, are Roman Catholics, but in the intervening years they do not greatly worry about the religious aspects of the Church, although its political side interests them greatly. Italian genius is largely responsible for the organization and preservation of the Roman Church. For the last three hundred years the Pope as well as more than half of the seventy cardinals, has always been an Italian. Yet to-day the majority of Italians are not clericals; they place the interest of the State before that of the Church and are determined not to tolerate any further trespassing of the Church on temporal premises. Roman Catholicism remains the State religion, but the Italian foreign policy has since 1870 been largely directed by fear lest a foreign Power should attempt to crown the Supreme Pontiff head of the Roman State.

The Law of Guarantees (1871) stripped from the Holy Father all his Italian possessions but left him the use of a few scattered buildings with a yearly pension equal to the average Papal budget. But at the same time the Italian Government continued to treat His Holiness as an independent sovereign and allowed him his guards, his extraterritoriality, his diplomatic inviolability. These conditions Pius IX



huffily refused to accept. He excommunicated all who took part in the occupation of Rome, declared himself a "prisoner" and retired to the Vatican never again to pass the walls of that grim fortress. So far from approving, he never officially recognized the new *de facto* situation and turning to France, "eldest daughter of the Church," he appealed almost openly to be reinstated.

France had become republican but French Catholics then as to-day considered it intolerable that the miserable Italians should have usurped the city of God and of the Church. Their contempt for Italian national aspirations had already cost them dear.

Long after the event, Crispi revealed how in 1869, in expectation of the Franco-Prussian war, an alliance was all but concluded between Austria-Hungary, Italy and France. The Italian demands were that, in case of successful war, Italy was to receive from Austria the Trentino and a better Eastern frontier, while the French troops then protecting the Pope were to be withdrawn from Rome. The French clericals refused and while France went down to single handed defeat before Germany, the Italians occupied Rome without asking France's permission. Bad feeling was left on both sides. Defeat rankled in the breasts of the French clericals and when from 1873 to 1877 they were in power, there was much loud talk of restoring the Pope. It is improbable that Germany would have permitted French aggression against Italy but Italy was afraid and notwithstanding the Francophile sentiments of King



Victor Emmanuel and the Conservatives, public opinion was very suspicious of France.

The death of Victor (1878) and the succession of his Germanophile son, Humbert, the tension with Austria which showed how few friends Italy really had, the jealousy of France over Tunis where the majority of Europeans were Italian, combined, with the election of the new Pope, Leo XIII, known for his hostility to his own country, to render Italy's position very difficult. Isolated between clerical France and expansionist Austria, for neither of which she was a match, her only possible continental ally was Germany. Bismarck resolutely refused any alliance with Italy that excluded Austria-Hungary and although the alliance was really more to his advantage than to Italy's he contrived to pull wool over the eyes of Crispi. The Italian feared to undergo either French bullying or war with Austria. Wounded *amour-propre* played a great part in determining the decision. The new country was feeble and immobilized by the ball and chain of the South. There was no mentality and little means for colonial enterprises. Even if there had been, both Lord Derby and Bismarck had suggested that Italy take Albania in "compensation" for Bosnia, which Austria was certain to annex. A few years later Great Britain even invited the Italian government to participate in the pacifying of Egypt, an expedition which no one familiar with history could have supposed would be unfruitful. Both occasions Italy refused—wisely. But when France, desperately seeking to repair her cracked continental prestige by the creation of an African Empire, declared a protec-

torate over Tunis (May, 1881) Italian public opinion stampeded. The following year Crispi signed the Triple Alliance.

In its first version it constituted for Italy a very poor bargain. Practically, it bartered away her claims to the unredeemed lands in exchange for support against French aggression in Europe and for protection against any restoration of the Temporal Power; it further left the way open for an understanding with Great Britain (reached about 1886). But it offered no guarantee against the further expansion of France in the Mediterranean or of Austria in the Balkans.

Yet it admirably achieved its main purpose: during the life of Leo XIII the Triple Alliance (renewed in 1887, in 1891 and 1902) was a constant foil to that energetic Pontiff's hostility to Italy and (in 1893) he admitted to Monsignor d'Hulst that he considered it the chief obstacle to the restoration of the Temporal Power.<sup>12</sup> With Leo's death in 1903 the danger diminished and after the French Separation Act (1905) disappeared altogether. Formally, the hostility between the Church and the Italian State continued unabated. Practically, the Italian clericals were restless and in 1904 received a kind of permission to enter national politics, from which previous pontiffs had asked them to abstain.

In 1887 the Triple Alliance was modified in Italy's favor. French advance in the Mediterranean was to be checked and "compensation" provided for an Austrian advance in the Balkans. Then in 1900 came the famous Prinetti-Delcassé agreement, in vir-

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<sup>12</sup> Bolton King and T. Okey, *Italy To-day*, p. 45.

tue of which Italy supported France in Morocco in exchange for a free hand in Tripolitania. The stupid commercial war with France was ended in 1904. These two facts awakened the suspicion of Germany. Italy as a member of the Triple Alliance had in German eyes no right to clandestine "flirtations" with other powers. Austria-Hungary therefore in 1905 became threatening. When Italy at Algeiras in 1906 upheld French claims in Morocco, Austria-Hungary replied in 1908 by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notwithstanding the terms of the Triple Alliance, Italy received no compensation. Her nationalists stormed and threatened, but the truth was that Italy, in the uncertainty of Great Britain's position, dared not provoke a conflict with the Central Powers. Yet at that moment Austria forfeited the right to Italian aid in case of war. Sympathy for Germany, however, remained strong although Great Britain's adherence to the Triple Entente had profoundly modified the European situation. Italian politics during this period were largely directed by shrewd scheming minds able to play upon popular pride, emotionalism and growing sympathy with Germany.

Another result of the annexation of Bosnia was the growth of Italian nationalism and the war with Turkey (1911-1912), itself an act aimed in part at Austria-Hungary. But owing to M. Poincaré, then Premier, a silly dispute over the right of search in war time (Manouba and Carthage incident) and the sympathy extended to Turkey during the war resulted in the hasty Peace of Ouchy (October, 1912) and the renewal of the Triple Alliance in December,

eighteen months before its expiration. France had forced Italy back into the arms of Germany.

Thus Italian foreign policy, founded on fear of the Church, later based on balance of power and gradual expansion, ended by becoming a kind of chess, to be played by diplomats and bankers for stakes of prestige, territory or commercial privilege wherein the masses, always ignored, had no vital interest. As in Italy, so in the other nations of Europe. This shameful tragi-comedy, wherein the peace of the world was batted hysterically back and forth between the nations was, on the Italian side, explicable only if considered in relation to German commercial penetration in Italy.

### THE COLONIAL FIASCO

When commercial nations reach a certain stage they seek for colonies. Colonies may indeed serve as an output for national production and so permit an industrial or agricultural development through the creation of wider demand; if naturally rich, they may become a fertile field for national exploitation without competition; they may offer a new recruiting ground for soldiers to be used in the struggle against civilized rivals; they may offer military or naval bases to be actively utilized or passively held to prevent their falling into the hands of rivals; they may offer a home for a surplus population which would otherwise be lost to the mother country; and they may merely arouse the possessors' aggressive qualities and swell their heads.

The Italian colonies, few in number and comparatively poor, so far serve none but the last of these

uses and must, therefore, be considered as a bad or extremely problematic investment. They were attained with great difficulty and their attainment has involved national humiliation—not without its salutary effect. They have never rendered a tithe of what they have cost. They consume little or nothing of the national products, which are not, save in a few lines, large enough for home consumption. They have not been seriously exploited in a commercial way and their chief products to date have been wars, rebellions and objects of archæological interest. As military or naval bases they are, with the exception of Valona, almost useless. Few or no Italians emigrate to them because neither climate, soil nor general living conditions are sufficiently attractive. Nor is there sufficient foundation for the arguments of Italian colonial enthusiasts that these territories of Libya, Eritrea and Somaliland can in the near future offer any manifest advantages. They will not pay, and even if they did, money spent on them might much more profitably be employed in domestic improvements. The sad conclusion is, therefore, that either the Italian colonial ventures were made in a state of blessed ignorance or they were made in order to “uphold national prestige,” and “to prove that Italy is a Great Power.”

Nevertheless, Italy is a great colonizing country, one of the greatest in the world. “Italian artisans and laborers, unaided, sometimes discouraged, by the State, have been building up in South America a greater Italy, which is destined to play a big part in the world’s history.” The excess population,



which is not kept at home by statesmanship and intensive improvement, emigrates to other European States, to the best shores of the Mediterranean, to North and South America.

Some day these emigrants, who have played so humble yet so gigantic a part in the material achievements of the modern world, will be recognized and in a measure kept at home by such a policy of internal renovation as proved so successful in Germany during the years before the war. They were always an economic factor in their country's growth; their remittances were a considerable item in the national economy. When they returned their opened eyes were not slow in noticing the unpleasant contrasts between their homeland and the countries they had visited. The qualities shown in foreign countries by Italian emigrants, their sturdy resistance, sober determination and success, are the best testimony as to what good government might make of Southern Italy and the harshest indictment of the successive Italian statesmen who have done little or nothing to relieve a condition so crippling to national initiative.

To all of Southern and much of Central Italy, emigration is the religion, ambition, present resolve and future hope.

### RADICALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM

Government in Italy has always been the prerogative of a small group known as the "governing classes." So it is in the United States, but in Italy they call things by their right name. The real difference lies in the recruiting conditions. Any Ital-



ians may aspire to become Prime Minister, just as all American boys may become President. But in America the opinion of the masses is, when all has been said, important; in the Italy of the past it has not been important. And Italy does possess a social hierarchy of a kind admitted in the United States only by the supplements of the Sunday newspapers. The chief distinction between Italy and the United States is that in Italy the number of proletarians in the governing classes is smaller because education is limited and money more difficult to acquire, and also because the effective criticism of the masses is much weaker. Until 1912 not more than one-third of the adult males had the vote. Government became in practice a semi-closed corporation existing for the benefit of the governing classes, who generously identified their own immediate interests with those of the nation. What is called and is effectively public opinion does not include more than a small proportion of the total population.

The result was economic exploitation of the worst sort. Overpopulation made for cheap labor. Ignorance cut at the roots of popular control, which could be exercised only by political opponents. But opponents rarely asserted their right to criticize since any scandal might have upset the entire economic spoils system whereby they in their turn hoped to profit. Had Italy, therefore, inhabited a closed world of her own, there seems no reason why the old system of ignorance and graft, dumb, driven cattle and piratical paternalism should not have lasted forever. But Italy had emigrants and Italy

had neighbors. Gradually against the system there developed a political and economic opposition.

From their origins socialism and the labor movement have been almost inseparable. At the beginning, indeed, what socialism existed was, under the influence of Bakunin and his First International, largely anarchist. And the anarchists were not definitely weeded out till 1892. The Italians seem always to have welcomed the idea of revolution and to have been, furthermore, under the constant illusion that revolution was always on the point of breaking out. Thus in the early Seventies and Eighties we have committees for Social Revolution with impressive programs, and sporadic outbreaks which frightened the authorities into exaggerated reaction.

But severity so contradicts the Italian temperament that each repression has brought a socialist victory in the following election. The socialists have lived on reaction. After Crispi's bullying of the Sicilians in 1893-94 when the Socialist Party was dissolved, the number of deputies in the next Chamber rose from two to five. After the yet more fear-inspired, brutal, and unjustified slaughter of hungry, discontented people (the famous *fatti di Maggio* at Milan in 1898) the combined socialists and radicals fought a successful battle against Pelloux and Sonnino, and in the new Chamber of 1900 their number rose to 32. Prosperity, on the other hand, has never been favorable to them, and the best method of combating them has proved to be tolerance.

During the Eighties there developed a Labor

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Party but it soon merged into the same group as the socialists and since then intellectuals and workers have been closely bound together. About the same time the leaders all felt the influence, rather, the domination, of Karl Marx. Anarchy fell into disrepute, immediate revolution was seen to be a silly phantom. And this tradition of gradual transformation lasted well up to the European War, and by its insistence on concrete reforms, contributed not only to the liberation of the workers from the hopeless economic slavery which had prevailed, but at the same time cemented the alliance between the Socialist Party and the trade unions which has been the great strength of both.

Ethically, the socialists have nearly always been an influence for good in Italian politics. They have fought the alliance of government and *mafia* in Sicily, broken the back of the *camorra* in Naples, introduced party discipline and a wholesome opposition in the Chamber of Deputies; they have been indefatigable in denouncing graft and intrigue.

The rise of the Italian workers and peasants to independence, dignity and comparative affluence has been almost their exclusive work. Even those who combated their ultimate ideals approved their actual accomplishments and applauded their victories.

Nevertheless, they did not, before the war, constitute a really imposing force in the national life.

### FUTURISTIC NATIONALISM

Nationalism was born in Italy about 1903 as a protest against democracy, corrupt government, materialism, lack of national feeling, servitude to

foreign countries and to the past. The underlying theory was furnished by two Italian thinkers, Pareto and Mosca, and was substantially this:

The so-called historical forms of government, autocracy, aristocracy, democracy, etc., are appearances under which the real rule has in all times been exercised by a small group of exceptional men who, through ability to manage either the sovereign autocrat or the sovereign people, have always enjoyed the privileges and responsibilities of government on condition of not exceeding certain limits fixed by sovereign sentiment. This being admitted, there is nothing to be gained by keeping up the pretense of democracy and going through the mumery of popular elections and the like. The people, the "child sovereign" of Schopenhauer, will always be led by the nose. Government will, therefore, be no more one sided and far more efficient nationally if exercised by an aristocratic self-constituted governing class composed of those most likely to have the requisite qualities—the old nobility, that is, rejuvenated by admixture with the rich and powerful among the middle class and the exceptionally gifted from the common people.

Such a government would, according to the theory, demand the rehabilitation of the old moral virtues: courage, audacity, self-sacrifice. The Italian government was less to be criticized for its corruption than for its indolent and smug materialism. The first Italian nationalists, by name Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini, advocated a bold colonial policy, not hypocritically with nonsense about shouldering the white man's burden, and not

to increase the national wealth, but for the effect colonial ventures would have upon the Italian character. In the same spirit they applauded death and war. These two Florentines, with Enrico Corradini, editor of the magazine *Il Regno*, undertook to awaken Italians from their lethargy. Away with humanitarian sentimentalism which values the life of a man or two above the glory of a nation! Away with ancient art, if its effect is to prevent modern men from creating! Down with an intriguing parliament composed of senile opportunists who seek only reëlection! Give us instead war, which magnifies national virtue, futurism which destroys and revolutionizes, and a government of strong men who will free Italy from servility to foreigners and stand her on her own hind legs!

In its origins the movement was essentially sane and well calculated to aid the nation in overcoming its shortcomings. But soon, however, its two founders began to see more clearly. As they expressed the matter in a new periodical, *La Voce*, the first need for Italians was to put their own house in order and acquire a sense of discipline, punctuality and cleanliness; they must fumigate public life, crush the *camorra* and the bureaucracy and modernize the South.

Enrico Corradini refused to be convinced of this and stuck to the old doctrines.

Unfortunately, the nationalists could not purge themselves of the greatest of the national weaknesses, the fascination of empty words. In their appeals to Italian youth, they greatly and in part in-



tentionally exaggerated the power and importance of Italy in the world. They insisted overmuch on the facile and the showy. To the original credo they gave a pseudoscientific character by the addition of much verbose theory—mere phrases, “Latinity,” “power of the race,” “immortal Rome,” “manifest destiny”—empty of any scientific character whatsoever. They overestimated the importance of foreign problems and overlooked domestic weakness. And they found natural but hardly disinterested allies in the steel and steamship companies, all those to whom an awakening of national spirit meant profit in the shape of high tariffs, military preparation and possible war.

This new nationalism had little or nothing to do with Mazzini’s dreams of nationality. Instead of universal coöperation it preached war—encouraged, not respect for nationality itself and hence of one’s neighbor, but conquest and domination. It tried to erect the struggle between nations into dogma—in a weak imitation of Marxism. Its real masters were Nietzsche and the German State worshipers, its religion the biological struggle for existence, its secret model Prussia.

Inevitably its appeal was greatest through the national drug, rhetoric. There was a new feeling in Italy; despite Giolitti and the bureaucracy the sleeping sense of nationality was stirring. It was sweet for Italians with little knowledge of foreign countries to hear themselves hailed as children of the Cæsars and salt of the earth.

One of the results of all this noise was the Italo-Turkish War of 1911–1912. Libya (Tripolitania



and Cyrenaica) is a poor country, the worst in North Africa. But it had been "assigned" to Italy by the convention with France in 1900. Italian opinion was restless of Giolitti's rule and the lack of any ideal or energy in public life contrasted with the slow but genuine progress of the country. Italy had increased in wealth. The public finances were in excellent condition; Italian money was quoted higher than that of France. The new national energies which not all the poor business methods and bureaucratic tentacles could stifle, demanded an employment. The national pride was suffering from the humiliation of 1908.

Occupation of Libya by Italy meant war with Turkey, no mean opponent. The bulk of the Italians, the suppressed common people, were averse to war, just as they always are. It was necessary in some way to overcome their opposition. So before the eyes of those who understood, the nationalists accomplished a brilliant feat of verbal prestidigitation. Libya, a miserable country, became in their words, a land of riches, running with mythological springs amid garden scenery. It could, they said, be made the second home of Southern Italians, the real answer to the problem how the surplus population could continue to emigrate and not be lost. Naturally, Southern Italians were enthusiastic. With the complicity of the Ministry of War a splendid forgery was undertaken whereby the name of Crispi, the father of abortive Italian colonization in Africa, was used in favor of a Libyan venture and the authority of Rohlfs, the great German explorer, was evoked to prove the riches of

the lands to be conquered. Conquered? Occupied by invitation of the Arabs, including the fanatical sect of the Senussi, who were pictured in a pathetic gesture of extending their hands to their Italian brothers and asking to be delivered from the Turks! Rome to the rescue!

The Government went with, if it did not actually encourage, the current. Since 1905 successive leaders had encouraged the pacific penetration of the *Banco di Roma* in order to have a ready pretext when the moment for action should come. Germany was hostile but Prime Minister Giolitti was incapable of an unpopular act. The Turkish War was, except with a small section of the socialists, immensely popular especially as an opportunity for a parade of national virtue with little risk. It constitutes the triumph of the nationalists.

The results are known. Contrary to the predictions of most of Europe, the Italian army fought well and Italian finance ably withstood the shock. Turkey was speedily beaten. The act of independence in defying Austria met with general approval and the result was that after a year or so the Treaty of Ouchy saddled Italy with the nominal possession of a vast and nearly worthless stretch of African sand. Italian prestige was undoubtedly strengthened throughout the world.

On the other hand, none of the benefits the nationalists had so lightly promised the country were fulfilled. The problem of crowding in the South remained unaltered, many millions of *lire* had been wasted which might more profitably have been spent at home, the army supplies were nearly ex-

hausted for possible use in Europe and, since Italy's real danger lay in the Adriatic and the Balkans, the two ensuing Balkan Wars might have involved her in real disaster. Fortunately, Turkey was beaten by the Balkan allies and Italy, returning to the breast of her Allies, managed to exclude Serbia from the Adriatic and obtain an agreement with Austria-Hungary whereby both sides guaranteed Albanian independence.

Nationalism—whatever its drawbacks—undoubtedly gave the country a much needed shake and in a country of scarce patriotism its doctrines, fatal if taken in exclusive measure, were merely a much needed tonic. Unfortunately, the nationalists had the experience of victory and learning how easily ignorant public opinion might be stampeded by bombast and falsehood, began to look about for new Libyas to conquer.

The wrath of the disillusioned common people was great; they had been promised a Paradise and handed a desert. To appease them, Prime Minister Giolitti in 1912 tossed them the sop of universal suffrage.

### GERMAN INDUSTRIAL PENETRATION

The North of Italy had by 1914 become one of the most prosperous spots in Europe and one in which, as in Belgium, agriculture and industry proceeded hand in hand. The agriculture was a normal growth; the industry was largely a forced plant, fertilized by Germany.

In 1887 the country became strongly protectionist and only after this date the large private fortunes

which had been made in land or public works were applied to industry. But just at this time Italian enterprise was crippled by an insane commercial war with France. Crispi's fighting spirit was aroused and he evoked Germany's financial aid. In 1895 a certain Schwabach, a German banker and pillar of the "Empire Trust," founded at Milan with German capital the *Banca Commerciale Italiana*. And thereby the Italian Faust definitely committed his salvation to the German Mephistopheles.

The immediate benefits of the new arrangement were soon obvious. Germany never put much capital into Italy but she loaned the services of the most competent financiers and industrial magnates in Europe and under their careful nursing in the balmy climate of high protection, Italian industry, good and bad, thrived. There is in the North Italy exceptional industrial aptitude and with the German models before them, Italians brought their enterprises to a flourishing condition.

Within a few years the steel industries, electric power plants, cotton spinning and weaving mills, the manufacture of automobiles, the silk industries, all began an era of remarkable growth and prosperity. It is a disputed point just how much German wisdom and experience was responsible for this, but we can judge only by the facts. After a few years German capital was almost entirely withdrawn from Italy, but German control remained, exercised through the Germans in the private office of the *Banca Commerciale Italiana*. Shipyards, navigation companies, everything was controlled by the *Commerciale*. Its influence was exerted through

the newspapers. And however Italian in appearance, this influence was always found to be on the side of Germany. At a certain moment the German control would seem to have tried to check the further growth of the very Italian industries it had aided in promoting, lest they prove too strong a competitor with German industries. Italy was flooded with German manufactured goods, better than could be made at home, cheaper than could be imported from Great Britain or the United States. The Italians were properly grateful. Germans in Italy were made to feel at home.

Alone among powerful peoples, the Germans took the trouble to study the Italians with a view to entering into a close partnership. Unlike the French, they did not assume a superior air and preface all investigation by a description of how similar affairs are conducted at Paris. They did not, like the English, hold aloof from Italian social life on grounds of moral superiority. Unlike the Americans, they withheld their opinions of Italian lack of efficiency and modernity, did not rail against the tipping system, boast of their money, or try to bully the all powerful bureaucracy. They were willing to proceed by slow Italian methods. They were sympathetic. Masters though they were, they carefully hid their mastery behind Italian dummies, chosen for their illustrious names and business incapacity. A system of long term credits made allowances for slowness and poverty. The bureaucracy was squared. From time to time, when they judged it necessary they exercised a little corrective tyranny. Italians who followed their advice and bought from



Germany, thrive; those who rebelled found difficulties in their path.<sup>13</sup>

The modern world knows at least three international organizations, the black, the red, the gold. The only strong antagonist is nationalism. The Black International of the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus was much weakened by the awakening of patriotism.<sup>14</sup> The Red International of labor, though apparently so strong, seems likely to succumb temporarily to the same adverse feeling. But the Gold International of Finance thrives on war as well. Interrupted by international conflict its links are speedily resumed. It is charged that some time before 1914 French and German banking magnates came to an agreement, to which the French Government also adhered, whereby Italy "was a field reserved to Germany," in compensation for other financial fields reserved to France. Be this as it may, the indisputable fact is that whereas in some countries the bankers of the Gold International remained true to their international interests, serving foreigners and nationals with equal zeal for gain, the German bankers served those of the German fatherland. In order that they should so serve it there had been organized that group of financiers, industrial magnates and politicians which has been aptly named the Empire Trust. Italy had economically become a fief of the Empire Trust.

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<sup>13</sup> See "Preface" by Maffeo Pantaleone to second edition, *La Germania alla Conquista dell'Italia*, by Giovanni Prezoisi, *La Voce*, Florence, 1916.

<sup>14</sup> It has been revived as the "White International," a kind of loose alliance linking the Italian Popular Party, the Catholic Center in Germany, and similar organizations in other countries.



The results of this submission of Italian life to German interests were not slow in appearing. German interests paralyzed any strong Italian reaction to Austria's expansion in the Balkans. German influence endeavored to prevent the Italo-Turkish War in the interests of Turkey, a recent satellite and, unsuccessful in this, succeeded in bringing the war to a premature close and negotiating the Peace of Ouchy. German interests acting through the *Banca Commerciale Italiana* obtained Italian support for Austria's candidate to the Albanian throne, the Prince of Wied. Precisely at the moment when German ambitions in the Near East had risen highest, the Italian commercial concessions in Turkey were given over for exploitation to the *Banca Commerciale*.

Financial interlocking, prosperity, cultural allegiance and unbounded respect were the strongest of the bonds that held Italy to Germany. The Italians had become prosperous through association with Germans; they rightly admired the Germans as masters of modern "economic thinking," and commercial domination. The Court and the aristocracy, though not the King, saw in Germany a guarantee of order and privilege in Europe. The nationalists envied and strove to copy the German imperial machine, its ruthlessness, its great centrifugal forces, its organization, contempt for sentiment and will to dominate. The socialists listened breathless for the Word of Bebel and Scheidemann. Scholars and scientists were impressed by the bulk and thoroughness of German erudition, while all classes appreciated the advantages of cheap goods. Danger was

not scented because no one dreamed of the possibility of war against the mighty ally and the firmness of the German strangle-hold on Italy was generally unrealized.

Yet deep in the hearts of certain groups of Italians was growing a passionate resentment against German interference in the national life.

Spiritually, discontent was eating at the Italian heart. Italy had not become what the fathers dreamed; for some reason she had not entirely made good. From the point of view of world culture or the betterment of man, as well as from the purely national side, fifty-odd years of Italian unity and independence had been something of a failure. Under the one-sided class prosperity, the easy acquiescence in foreign financial domination, the indolent graft and political intrigue, the crass ignorance, something generous, vital, idealistic, self-sacrificing was stirring uneasily. Little by little the Italians were finding themselves and becoming in the spiritual and only true sense, a nation.

## CHAPTER VII

### ITALY RISKS THE GREAT ADVENTURE

“International Politics,” said Bismarck, “are a fluid matter which may, in certain conditions, solidify, but which, under given atmospheric variations, returns to its primitive state.” If we believe in the authority of a master we shall, therefore, show no astonishment at the dissolution of the Triple Alliance which Italy, in 1915, under the atmospheric variations occasioned by the European War, provoked. Was it not rightly said that Italy and Austria-Hungary must either be allies or enemies? When, after the declaration of Italian neutrality in August, 1914, they ceased to be allies, it needed no unusual gift of prophecy to foretell that they would soon become open enemies.

For in a certain way they had always been enemies. The key of Italian policy in the twentieth century had been distrust of the Slavs. The recognized leader of the Austrian Slavs, whose plans aimed at making the Dual Monarchy over into a trialism, was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and as he rose to power and influence his progress was followed closely by all Italians.

Late in the afternoon of June 28, 1914, two women, one an Italian, the other an American tourist, came out of the portico of Saint Peter's at Rome and started across the sunlit square. On the way they

crossed a hurrying news-seller who was shouting something inarticulate. The American bought a paper and glanced at its headlines.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria has been assassinated!"

Her companion stopped short and breathed deeply. "I'm so glad!"

"Why, Ilda," remonstrated the American, "how savage you are! How can you say such things?"

"My dear, it is you who don't understand these matters. I'm glad the Archduke is dead because he was our enemy."

Through this woman Italy gave voice to its true feeling toward Austria and it is certain that from many an Italian breast that same night a sigh of gratitude went forth to Gavrilo Prinzip, the obscure slayer of Bosnian Serajevo.

### NEUTRALITY

The Italian Government might diplomatically make what alliances it chose, the Italian people would never fight on the side of Austria-Hungary, the ancient enemy, the seat of medievalism, the anachronistic empire built on contempt for the principle of nationality. Theoretically, Italy by battling in the Triple Alliance would have had a sure victory and secured immense booty: Corsica, Nice, Tunis, perhaps Algeria and Egypt. But, practically, the free Italian people would have struggled to prevent the Government from making war on France and would have gone to any lengths rather than make war on Britain. This is the answer to those who describe the country's later action as vulgar

blackmail. Had the Italians merely wanted booty they could have found it in plenty by remaining with their former allies; France would doubtless have been defeated and Britain forced into an unfavorable compromise. Practically every one in Italy but a few ultranationalists and the army reactionaries, was immensely relieved when the Government declared for neutrality.

The legal basis for this act was impeccable. It lay in the interpretation of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia, of which Italy had not even been notified. Austria declared her act to be of a defensive character, the rest of the world, Italy included, held it directly offensive. Once before in August, 1913<sup>1</sup> Austria had desired to attack Serbia and had only been withheld by Italy's refusal to participate in any such action. Now the Italians, acting in virtue of Articles 2 and 3 of the Triple Alliance which made the whole thing binding only if one of the signers be attacked by a Power outside the alliance, felt free to choose their own course. And Germany, while secretly supporting Austria, outwardly acknowledged the justice of Italy's neutrality—in the hope of keeping Italy neutral.

At the beginning of the war Italy found herself strangely placed—"the friend of the Entente and the formal ally of the Central Powers, the potential enemy of Austria and France and the lasting friend of two irreconcilable rivals, Germany and Britain."

The Triple Alliance had developed in thirty years from a scheme to keep France from meddling with the status of the Pope into something quite different.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Die Politischen Geheimverträge Oesterreich-Ungarns*. A. E. F. Pribram, A. F. Braumüller, 1920.

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But once directed against Great Britain it ceased to be genuine, since never would the Italians move against the mistress of the seas. In 1914 it represented, so far as Italy was concerned, a kind of delicate balance wheel designed to protect that country from armed or diplomatic aggression by any state, whether within or without the alliance; to maintain the balance of power; to safeguard European peace. The rivalry between Great Britain and Germany was peculiarly useful to Italy on condition that it did not compel her to take sides against the latter. Both nations were large exporters and the competition between them lowered prices. Germany's military domination on the Continent was more than offset by Britain's control of the sea and in particular by her possession of Suez and Gibraltar, the two keys to the sea wherein Italy lies a prisoner. Once, therefore, Germany had upset the balance of power, Italy's interest was no longer in the Triple Alliance but in seeing Germany reduced to her place.

Back of Italian neutrality was a second secret agreement. In 1902 France and Italy agreed that in case either were "the object of a direct or indirect aggression on the part of one or more Powers" the other would preserve strict neutrality. Nor did this agreement with France violate text or spirit of the Triple Alliance, which pledged Italy to fight beside Germany only in case of "aggression not directly provoked." In 1914 Germany was patently the aggressor and could but be silent when Italy declared for neutrality. This interpretation of the war was accepted by Roumania, who was bound by another treaty to aid Austria-Hungary in case of



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aggression against the latter "in a portion of her states contiguous to Roumania"—read, in case of attack by Serbia. Italian neutrality under the circumstances was not, therefore, a matter of free choice at all, but of faith to pledged word. Yet had she decided otherwise the defeat of France would have been practically assured.

### WHAT THE PEOPLE FELT

Thirty years of secret diplomacy and bad government had so thoroughly disconcerted the Italian people that there was nothing like an enlightened public opinion. It took nearly nine months of armed neutrality for such an opinion to crystallize about the situation and events of the European War. August 1914 took Italy unawares and left her in fearful wonderment. In the first days most Italians could foresee nothing but a victory for Germany. After the battle of the Marne, however, opinion as to the outcome was evenly divided. As to the position Italy ought to take there was, generally speaking, no opinion at all.

A few extreme nationalists with some army men and noble lords had wished to fight beside Germany and looked upon the declaration of neutrality as a national disgrace. They became resolute neutralists.

The statesmen, almost without exception, were hostile to Austria-Hungary without being opposed to Germany. They hoped to keep friendly with the Teutons while definitely shutting out the Slavs from the Adriatic. On the whole they were in favor of continued neutrality.

A large majority of the rich and powerful, especi-

ally in the North, were linked by political sympathy, general admiration and financial interest to Germany and feared a real break with that Power above all things.

A very small clerical group stood alone in being pro-Austrian.

The majority of the deputies were not men of profound views and before making up their minds they waited for Boss Giolitti to furnish a cue. In the meantime they too were inclined to favor neutrality.

The common people were politically dumb and to all intents and purposes indifferent. They asked peace and to be let alone, especially after the disillusion of the Libyan War. Many were peasants whose imagination did not go beyond their farm; some were shopkeepers avid of gain who had not yet realized there was immensely more money to be made in war than in peace; a few were sincere pacifists, others artists and musicians who hid their egocentric outlook in a fine scorn for politics. There is little military temper in Italy. In the final decision none of these groups were consulted. Had they been, there is little doubt but they would have advocated neutrality at any cost.

The official socialists, the *Partito Socialista Ufficiale*, were in a moment of crisis. Never very strong, they found themselves without the power to oppose Italian entrance into war should it prove advisable. Elsewhere, in France and Germany, the Socialists had compromised their principles. It is not strange that in Italy, where they were afterwards to prove so unyielding, they should at first have wavered a little. In January, 1915, Graziadei,

a deputy and socialist leader, stated that the most important of Italian political problems was how not to come out of the war period isolated as a nation. Filippo Turati, the acknowledged chief of the Party, made a semi-patriotic declaration ten days later against the proposal of a general strike in case of Italian mobilization.

A certain number of republicans, radical democrats and liberal spirits were from the outset friendly to France and Great Britain. The influence of Free Masonry was on the same side. The Garibaldi brothers were already fighting in France and it was felt that the liberal Garibaldian tradition, one of the finest things in Italian history, was on the side of the Western Powers. A strong current of popular sentiment, indignant at German military brutality and Italy's position as poor relation in the Triple Alliance, backed this movement. Italy, historically the civilizer of Europe, the direct heir of forty centuries of civilization, was tired of being treated as a minor by any one. The country had not yet reached full unity but it might, men felt, be unified through comradeship on the battlefield. Administration, choked by a dessicated undemocratic bureaucracy, could be released and purified in the winds of crisis. Backward industries would have to be developed, national resources more intensely exploited. Skepticism and indifference could be overcome and a real content given by achievement to the prodigious national vanity. Lombardy, the most developed section of the country, took the lead in promoting this feeling. The Milan papers, the best in the land, did much to popularize these ideas.

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Italy should, they maintained, enter the war on the side of the Western Powers in the name of democracy. In their foreign politics Britain and France might be as thorough-going exponents of the doctrine of grab as Austria-Hungary or Germany. But socially, ideally, the Central Powers had remained medieval. Britain and France stood in many respects for the antithesis of Germany and Austria-Hungary. Britain and France had parliamentary government on a basis of universal suffrage. The *Reichstag* and *Reichsrat* were debating societies and government could continue even if they were suppressed. In the eyes of these Italians the Western Powers stood for light, the Central Empires for darkness. Austria-Hungary in particular sinned against the right of nationality by virtue of which Italy had come into being.

A strange alliance was formed between these democrats and the undemocratic nationalists. The latter, after joyfully accepting possible war against France, now showed equal enthusiasm for war against Austria. For them the important thing was to fight, any one, anywhere. They thrilled with the idea that Italy was about to make history on a great scale and pointed with pride to the increase of population. Italy was a great Power and should have her say in the reorganization of the world. The armament makers too were in favor of fighting. . . .

### A GROUP OF IDEALISTS

In the midst of general uncertainty, political realists and foreign-gazing Italians favorable to one or

the other of the two groups, there existed a few Italians who constituted the fine flower of her political opinion. They were favorable to Italy's intervention on grounds of national morality. Believing that the world is ruled by ideas, they understood the hidden influence of character. Aware of the national shortcomings, they combated them with an almost quixotic idealism and desired their country to fight as an act of moral redemption. In some hardly explicable way they felt how the justification of history depended on the defeat of a nation possessed by the ideals of modern Germany. Moreover Italian materialism and sodden sleepy corruption seemed to them worse than any misfortune war could bring. While others were seeking power, wealth, territory, prestige, they were seeking the national soul.

In contemporary Europe there was hardly a group to be compared to them. "Better," they said, "the Germans at Milan, at Venice, at Florence than . . . Giolitti in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." For to them Giolitti incarnated all the national lack of character they abhorred.

Almost all were young men whom the temptations and compromises of practical life had not yet corrupted. And because in the soft material world of the time they were so rare, it is worth while to spend a little time on the life and ideas of one of them.<sup>2</sup>

Paolo Marconi was born at Verona in August, 1895, and died in the Trentino in June, 1916, at the head of his platoon of Alpine troops. Yet in the

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<sup>2</sup> Paolo Marconi, "Io udii il Comandamento," *La Voce*, Rome, 1919.



course of his score of years he managed to epitomize all that was best in Italian youth. For us his life becomes interesting in the days of Italian neutrality and precisely in October, 1914, when with some friends of his own age, he succeeded in founding a newspaper, *The Present Hour*, to express the opinion of his group. Its message was that Italy should enter war speedily against the Central Empires. For eight months he remained in journalism, planning in March, 1915, an unpractical, never tried excursion into the Trentino in the hope of causing an international incident that would provoke war. When Italy finally did enter the struggle he enlisted and a year later was killed. What we know of his opinions we learn from his newspaper articles and his personal letters.

Italian independence was a fact. Through it "a people was free that had never felt the desire to be free." It is not, therefore, surprising that in the years following such a people "vegetated and served."<sup>3</sup>

"Italy was incapable of progress unaided."

Later, however, "the peninsula was invaded by foreigners and foreign capital, largely German, through whom trade and industry flourished. . . . Foreign industrialism developed and grew as though it were a force of our own; but the Italian people were absolutely extraneous to it; they served but did not nourish it. Thus the Italian people reached a certain level of economic well being which they had not deserved, since they had not suffered for it or given anything to it."

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<sup>3</sup> Paolo Marconi, "Io udii il Comandamento," *La Voce*, Rome, 1919.



Wars are often waged for commercial expansion. But Italy, a poor country, had no real need for expansion. Italy must enter the war for other reasons which only the young could understand, to redeem, that is, "our ancient degradation." This degraded spirit still dominated many Italians—"I do not wonder that the majority to-day do not desire war—but that matters little."

Nor was Italy to think of other countries. Her own salvation was her problem. Marconi desired Italy to enter the war "because only a great sacrifice can give us that which no bargain can ever give us, because only a great sacrifice can kindle and raise up a great love." "We do not want Trent and Trieste. They are only a pretext and a justification for fools. We want something more important and more sacred. We do not want to redeem Trent and Trieste; we want to redeem and temper all Italy."

"Better a great defeat than this tormenting, depressing inaction."

In strange words like these rather than in the scheming of the diplomats is to be found the true explanation of Italy's entry into war.

### WHAT THE DIPLOMATS WANTED

Italians habitually explain and excuse their country on the ground of its youth. But never was there a country in which youth is held in greater suspicion! The statesmen chosen to direct national action during the difficult days of neutrality and war were, to say the least, mature. Conservative by nature, they had through the narrow experience of decades reached a point where they considered

change the real enemy and new ideas as dangerous as new wine. It is hard to understand the Italian errors of this period unless we remember that they were committed by stubborn, reactionary old men with no great knowledge of the world and a profound distrust of the common people. In March, 1914 Boss Giolitti decided to take a vacation and so allowed the burden of state to fall (temporarily, of course) on the shoulders of Antonio Salandra, a conservative Southerner, remarkable for his lack of salient qualities. In October of the same year, Di San Guiliano, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, died, and was succeeded by a former champion of the Triple Alliance, Baron Sidney Sonnino. The latter was famous throughout Italy for his mistrust of democracy, his stubborn taciturnity, his misoneistic mind, and his honest patriotism.

Under the guidance of these venerable hardshells, Italy's conduct in the world of politics was to be determined by several realistic, one might almost say materialistic fears and desires. Now, so long as Italy was willing to remain exactly where she was, she had nothing to fear from any one. But these statesmen, impelled by traditional ambitions so strong as to transcend almost any personal opinions, wanted Italy to become a factor of ever increasing importance in the world. They might have striven to realize this within the country itself by raising the standards of education and social condition, by improving the land and increasing the national riches, by using their influence against rather than for a rapid increase of population and pitting the ideal

of quality against the quantitative ideal which had largely served to loose the tragic conflict upon the world. But it was too late for that; the statesmen could imagine nothing beyond the old methods. They were determined not only that Italy's position on the international checkerboard should not be weakened but that it should be materially strengthened by the war. Ambition engendered fear lest the designs be unfulfilled. And in consequence they looked with suspicion on their neighbors.

Considered in the light of Italian ambition, the entrance of Italy into the war became probable from the moment that country declared her neutrality and Britain entered the war on the side of France, for the very good reason that by her declaration of neutrality Italy had angered Germany, the only European power strong enough to preserve the kingdom from aggressions on the part of the nations of the Triple Entente. For on the side of the Entente were the two nations which, barring only Austria, Italy most feared—France, and a Serbia behind which the terrible expansive power of Pan-Slavism could be felt.

In the turmoil of war in Europe, Italy hoped to solve her three most pressing international "problems": to redeem the Italian provinces under Austrian rule; to secure strong military frontiers; to occupy the best places in the Adriatic and hold them against the rival ambitions of both Slavs and Germans.

The unredeemed provinces included the Trentino, Trieste and part of Venetia Julia, and Western Istria. But the Istrian peninsula (peace be with

Woodrow Wilson!) is practically indivisible and has always been considered as belonging to Italy. As evidence it suffices to quote the official Austrian organ, the *Osservatore Triestino* of February 9, 1848, in which it is admitted by the Austrians that "Istra is a country little known to Italy, and yet it belongs to it by geographical position, by language, by customs, by memories, by desires." It is a long time since 1848; any *de facto* change in the character of the population since that date, under the influence of Austrian schemes to oust the Italians, is simply unrecognized by Italy.

Unfortunately, the territories really inhabited by Italians are not bounded by a line suitable for becoming a strong military frontier. The Germans in the Trentino spilled over the Alpine watershed centuries ago. And to find a strong line on the East one has to go well into Slovenia, as far as the Dynaric Alps. But the Italian craving for military frontiers had been sharpened by long experience with the peculiarly unfavorable frontiers granted by Austria-Hungary in 1866—the Austrians in the hills ready to come down whenever they chose, the Italians in the plains below, hopelessly gazing upward. And Italian ambition was willing to violate the principle of nationality in the endeavor to reach on all sides the Alpine watershed and hold the passes. Whether Italy, any more than the United States or the British Empire, has any natural frontiers—whether a nation is a topographical as well as a spiritual unit—cannot be lightly decided. The hard fact in the question was that the Italian statesmen were no longer willing to have their

frontiers open to easy attack by a possible enemy.

To control the Adriatic was the greatest ambition of the three. Around this sea route we find three mighty appetites centered. The Germans had long determined to dominate the Orient from the Adriatic and the *Drang nach Triest* was far more vital a move in the German game than the advance on Bagdad. To prevent such a move was automatically to hold down German power. This Italy desired to do, remembering that in 1866 she had been warned from Berlin that "Trieste is a German city." It was essential to Italian schemes that Germany should not win the war.

But for the hand of the fair widow whom the Doges of Venice had so triumphantly wedded, there were other suitors, the Slavs of the East shore. For some years Italian statesmen had watched with perturbation the growth of what is called Pan-Slavism, a movement embodied in Russia, in Serbia and in the Slavic lands of Austria-Hungary. To keep Serbia out of the Adriatic, Italy in 1913 aided Austria in maintaining an independent Albania and had thus been directly responsible for the Second Balkan War. In 1915 Sonnino and Salandra desired to strengthen Italy at the expense of Austria without strengthening Serbia or permitting the foundation of a new South Slav state. Who knew when back of such a state the huge medieval face of Russia might not appear? While if Austria were to triumph and absorb Serbia the Slavs would be in so great a majority that they would be more than a match for Germans or Magyars and direct the future policy of the state—against Italy. Nor were the Ital-



ians satisfied with maintaining the actual situation.

The cause was to be sought in topography. Rome had controlled the Adriatic; Venice had controlled the Adriatic; why should not the third Italy do the same? Unfortunately, topography favors the Balkan and not the Italian shore. To be master of the Adriatic both Rome and Venice had been obliged to conquer what is now Dalmatia, where from the latter occupation there remained groups of Italians and an unbroken tradition of Italian culture. A solution of the problem—distasteful to the nationalist imagination—had been suggested by Mazzini: make friends with the Slavs. Italian statesmanship proposed instead to checkmate both Germans and Slavs by occupying vast sections of the northern and eastern shore. The Adriatic was to become an Italian lake. This demanded action; to remain neutral and passive would have meant to gain nothing during the war, indeed to lose immensely in prestige if not in actual possessions. National ambition could not contemplate such a prospect without horror. Whatever happened, Italy must take an aggressive attitude and better her position. Of this all the statesmen, neutralist as well as interventionist, were agreed.

The belief was current that the war could not last long. Quick action was necessary. Two methods were open to Italy, open war or diplomatic negotiation. And no trifling with sentiment, either. In the words of Dillon,<sup>4</sup> "the ministers, who looked upon themselves as temporary trustees of the community liable to be called upon to render an account

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<sup>4</sup> E. J. Dillion, *From the Triple to the Quadruple Alliance*.



of their stewardship, held that they were not free to substitute generosity for the furtherance of national interests.”

Physically and spiritually, the country was not prepared for war. Giolitti had allowed the army to decline. At no time had it been half so large as that of France and the Lybyan War had been a heavy strain. The fleet was presumably excellent but small, barely larger than that of Austria-Hungary. The country was not really unified. Labor was restless. Lack of public spirit, regionalism, the Vatican problem, German financial control, were so many points of weakness. In one sense Italy had been bluffing for years. Rated as a great Power, she had possessed few of the characteristics of one.

But time was passing, the war would be short. Peace must find an enlarged and powerful Italy holding down her new frontiers in the mountains and the strong places on the shores of the Adriatic. Accordingly, Baron Sonnino extended a hand and grasped Valona in Albania, at the mouth of the Adriatic, and entered into negotiations with both groups of belligerents. It was not a pretty policy but it conformed to the inveterate habits of European diplomacy.

### NEGOTIATIONS

Just how greatly the Allies desired Italian aid we do not, in the absence of published documents, yet know. Certainly they did not yet realize that it was indispensable to victory. But something can be inferred. Early in January, 1915, Sazonoff, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, gave an interview to

an Italian journalist<sup>5</sup> recognizing Italy's right to Valona but warning her to keep her hands off Dalmatia. This interview would hardly have preceded previous diplomatic conversations. But it is not probable that Italy definitely consented to listen to Allied offers before Baron Sonnino had become convinced that little or nothing was to be had from Austria-Hungary.

In December, 1914, Austrian troops crossed the Danube and entered Serbia. Hardly had the fact become known when Italian diplomacy got busy. Article 7 of the Treaty of Triple Alliance states that in case Italy or Austria-Hungary should find it necessary to modify the Balkan *status quo* by a temporary or a permanent occupation, "this occupation shall take place only after previous agreement between the two Powers," based on the principle of reciprocal compensation. As in 1908 Austria forgot to compensate Italy for the annexation of Bosnia, so in 1914 she forgot to make a previous agreement about invading Serbia. But the situation had changed and Italy was not slow to realize it. Austria-Hungary was menaced by the Serbian movement and was fighting for her very existence. Italy held the balance of power between the two warring groups of Powers. "Just what," Baron Sonnino asked, "do you offer us?"

The Austrians temporized. The clique represented by Field Marshal Conrad von Hoetzendorf were powerful at Vienna just then and it was an axiom with them that no consideration need be paid to Italy. If the Italians did fight, what had the in-

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<sup>5</sup> Correspondent of the Milan *Corriere della Sera*.

vincible soldiers of the Dual Monarchy, the military salad of Germans, Magyars, Croatians, Slovenes, Poles, Roumanians, Czecho-slovaks, and men of the Austrian Ukraine, to fear from a nation of macaroni-fed mandolin players?

Even after the Italians had occupied Valona and were in a position to close the Adriatic, the Austrians never budged. They had a thousand warnings, but warnings are generally thrown away upon professional military men. Better fight Italy than yield the Trentino and lose control of Trieste! In the meantime signs were not lacking that the Italians might fight. An active press campaign was raging in favor of intervention and in January, 1915 the Vatican had already shown alarm over the possibility of Italian entry against Austria.

We do not know just when Baron Sonnino convinced himself that nothing was to be had from Austria-Hungary and turned to the Allies. But before taking a definite step he made a last offer: Italy would remain neutral in exchange for certain concessions; the Trentino, the cities of Gorizia, and Gradisca, several Adriatic islands and definite possession of Valona, while Trieste with a small hinterland was to be made into an autonomous state with a free port. Italy demanded also the right of immediate occupation.

To these mild requests, which did not reach the limit of Italian ethnographic "rights," the Austrians at first did not reply. When finally, as a blind and with no intention of keeping faith, they did deign to answer, it was too late. In the words of the Deputy, Signor Petrillo:

“If Austria had not imagined she could reckon upon Giolitti’s omnipotence in the Chamber and at Court she would have given way in time. Time is one of the circumstances that alter cases. We may take it that if the concessions which Austria, with tardy repentance made only in the middle of May, had been offered of her own free will in August, 1914, they would have caused Franz Josef to be acclaimed in the public places of Italy and would have forced us to fight side by side with Austria. If they had been put forward in January they would have disarmed us. Conceded in May and in a form that insulted us all, they drove us into war. That is the truth.”

But not the strict truth. Not the Austrian offer, but ambition drove the Italian government into war. For Italy had already signed the Pact of London with Russia, France and Great Britain, obtaining from them, in return for a pledge to enter the war within one month, a promise of more than her wildest imperialists could hope. The date was April 24, 1915. On May 4, Baron Sonnino denounced the Treaty of Triple Alliance. The conduct of Austria-Hungary is an example of how blind arrogance may cause the downfall of a mighty empire.

The Germans were far wiser. It is said that they warned the Austrians to be sure of Italy before despatching the ultimatum to Serbia. Hardly had Sonnino begun to negotiate with Austria for compensation when the most distinguished German diplomat, Prince von Buelow, arrived in Rome as ambassador, with the specific task of keeping Italy neutral.

The German Embassy stood over the ruined temple of the old Roman Super Divinity, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, on the Capitoline Hill—a fact which may have seemed to the Teutons a fitting symbol of future Weltmacht—but the headquarters of the Prince were located in his own exquisite Villa Malta, near the center of fashionable life. For it was the prosperous elements in Italy who favored neutrality.

Be it said that Prince von Buelow proved worthy of his reputation as diplomat and man of the world and waged a masterly campaign. Had the drama proceeded as such things commonly go, he would have kept Italy neutral. His plan was to flatter, win over, threaten, bribe or in any other way convince the Italian “governing classes” that their country ought not to lift a hand against Imperial Germany. In his villa, therefore, he kept open house, cajoling the aristocratic, warning the financiers, appealing to all that was snobbish, wealthy or undemocratic. His agents bought newspapers, bribed writers, provided documents to all natural sympathizers and strove to create more. Skillfully all the neutralist elements were organized.

Still the pro-war feeling grew, ably fanned by widespread propaganda and openly fostered by the many democrats whom Prince von Buelow ignored. When the wily Buelow became convinced matters were likely to go against him, he changed tactics and urged Austria-Hungary to yield to all of Sonnino’s demands. Fortunately for Europe, his efforts were in vain. Empty pride and idiotic frivolity held sway at Vienna and against them not even German influence could avail.



## THE GREAT ADVENTURE

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Some day we may know the secret part played by the Allies, especially by the French Ambassador, Camille Barrère. Their open propaganda was carried out on almost as large a scale as that of Germany. But in a far wiser manner. Germany appealed to reason, the Allies to sentiment. The Italian people are sentimentally generous and they responded readily to the appeal of lecturers and writers who told of Belgium invaded and tortured France. Sympathy for the Allies grew steadily.

But even in May, 1915, it seemed that no force could drive the country into war. Inertia and opposition were too great. The Germanophile elements were noisy and apparently cocksure. For back of the Neutralists, subtly leagued with Prince von Buelow, was the master, Boss Giolitti, who did not want war. "Much," said the Dictator, "can be gained without going to war." Better in his opinion, accept something without fighting, than plunge the country into the ruinous or regenerative Great Adventure. Giovanni Giolitti, if we may believe him sincere, foresaw that the war would be long and uncertain. Either it would end in Allied defeat and Italy would share the general ruin, or it would mark the downfall of the Central Empires and install Allied hegemony in Europe. Italian interests demanded that no such hegemony be created. The best that could happen for Italy would be an indecisive war. Giolitti had no great faith in Italian military virtue and recognized only too well how bad were the conditions of the army. He has been accused of serving German finance but the proofs are yet to be published. His conduct is amply explained



on grounds of conviction. For the majority of his followers, who dominated in almost all branches of Italian public life, it was enough that the Boss had decided. The Chamber of Deputies was in his pocket. If Salandra and Sonnino, defying his decision, had dared to make vain promises to enter the war, so much the worse for them. There was still time to eject them from office and undo their work. On May 9 the Dictator arrived in Rome and immediately sought contact with the Neutralists. Four days later Premier Salandra and his cabinet resigned, submitting without even presenting the issue to Parliament. So strong are inveterate habits. . . .

### THE PEOPLE CHECKMATE GIOLITTI

The emotional nourishment of the Italian people during the first twenty days of May, 1915, was charged almost to the point of explosion. No people less used to effervescence could possibly have kept moderately sober under the influence of so many fizzing ideas and foaming emotions. The battle between Neutralists and Interventionists, Giolitti and Sonnino, Germanophile finance and Francophile democracy, was in full swing. No one could say positively whether Italy would enter the war. I had been told in Paris that her intervention was certain. At Quarto near Genoa I had listened while a short, bald headed poet called D'Annunzio poured forth to a crowd weeping with delirium, a torrent of rhapsodical rhetoric whose message was war. But the choice of the country was dubious. Italy's leaders had no accomplished fact or immediate ag-

gression to flaunt before their countrymen. To the best of my knowledge, no nation, consulted freely and individually in circumstances permitting patient reflection, had ever chosen war. And in Italy I was not in touch with the democratic and ardent patriots outside public office who were the greatest force for intervention. Among the persons whom I met, diplomats, business men, deputies, journalists, the soberer elements seemed committed to peace. They reasoned; against their reasoning the Interventionists opposed either dubious arguments about a short struggle or emotional declamation. The groups centering about the Garibaldi family threatened to depose the Monarch in case of peace, the Germanophiles in case of war. The Deputies were hopelessly committed to Giolitti. They were for the most part ignorant of the Pact already signed by the Government to enter the war. But Giolitti himself knew and for that reason his conduct aroused the suspicion of treason in many. He was the more hated by the Interventionists because they realized that in regular battle in the Chamber the Salandra-Sonnino factions could never hope to win against him. He was the Boss, the Dictator, the Master.

The Government had conducted its negotiations with the utmost secrecy. Political questions had been bandied about in endless discussions until they were battered out of all shape or harmony with facts. Typical was the economic question of intervention or neutrality. Remaining neutral, Italy, according to the Interventionists, would have to beg food and fuel from the Allies who controlled the sea and these they would be little likely to concede to a

country of which they were already suspicious. By entering the war, replied the Neutralists, Italy would forfeit her rights to free communication with all countries and would strain her feeble finances to the breaking point. Agents of nearly every country in Europe came and went among the crowd and were accused of spending fabulous sums: Germans who talked big, ambiguous Austrians secretly damning the Italians as traitors, nervous Roumanians, self-righteous English, consciously dignified French, Belgians. There were street fights and Germans were spat upon. Many an Italian was eaten by perplexity as to what ought to be done. While the rural districts remained inert, Milan and Rome became centers of war spirit.

The Interventionists, with or without Governmental support, had formed a vast conspiracy for forcing the country into the war even against the will of Parliament. The plan had its roots in the army and navy bureaucracy. Members were recruited from the young and the professional men and a strong section of the skilled workers. They possessed arms and collected high explosives. The centers were in Milan, Rome and the Romagna. On all sides volunteers were found willing to aid. In their ranks nationalists coöperated with extreme radicals, ultra democrats with monarchical conservatives. The brave days of the *Risorgimento* seemed to have returned and a wind of heroic action blew through the country. The Interventionists were not the particular friends of Sonnino; they cared little for the crafty arguments or diplomatic mind of the old-fashioned Baron. They were out to re-

generate Italy and free her once and for all from those foreign influences which had never ceased to haunt her. Long enough had she suffered the contempt or hostility of insolent foreigners. Yet in the country generally their decisive influence was unrealized, for they were a minority and their strength was measured in terms of resolute wills. They found their spokesman in the poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Why did D'Annunzio, who had been living abroad, a fugitive from his creditors, return to his native land just at this moment? What Government or what group enlisted his services? What were the means used? The questions are frequently asked and lightly answered in Italy. But the truth is not demonstrated. D'Annunzio is a fervent patriot and did not need stimulants to arouse his feeling. D'Annunzio knew how to appeal to his countrymen in the involved highfalutin periods that they loved. And D'Annunzio urged action, preached war! Those were reasons enough for his amazing popularity. At Genoa and at Rome he was received by multitudes. Only those who know how easily popular demonstrations can be staged in Italy have ever suspected the sincerity of these manifestations.

The conspiracy was successful. The country was stampeded into war. When Salandra resigned and a clear majority of the Chamber of Deputies left visiting cards at Giolitti's Rome apartment in sign of devotion, the cause of intervention seemed lost. But then the chief conspirators gave the signal and the people responded with amazing spontaneity. Barricades were thrown up in Rome. Crowds invaded the squares and howled for war. Death to

## IMMORTAL ITALY

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Giolitti and the lackeys of Villa Malta! D'Annunzio was at his best and his words flowed unceasingly. War on Austria or war on the Italian Monarchy! The gravest and the most ridiculous held hands and embraced in their fervor for a common end. There were tumults—encouraged yet kept in check by the Salandra-Sonnino group, who saw in them a last chance of victory. Threatened with violence, hissed in the streets, pelted with stones, the Neutralist deputies yielded. Giolitti fled to Piedmont wondering doubtless what demon had seized on his wild countrymen. The King asked Salandra to continue as Prime Minister. The Chamber met on May 20 and voted confidence in the Government! At midnight of May 23, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary. From the mountains armed men descended to the cities the following day, to offer themselves as volunteers.

Never was a more important decision. But it was the decision of a determined minority consciously using illegal methods for the sake of their country's soul. Italy's war was, as wars go, popular. And while official Italy fought to further ambitious designs embodied in the wages of Shylock, the people entered the struggle in obedience to a deep instinct, a blind feeling for the better part, for the world's future; an instinct which logic could not justify but which was perhaps not other than obedience to the trend of Destiny.



## CHAPTER VIII

### TRIAL BY FIRE

The quintessential history of the Italian war is the crisis of a people who were led to the edge of disaster by immature and false ideals and who were then saved by truth. To Italians the war was much more than participation in a gigantic conflict; it was a test of their moral right to democracy and independence, of their claim to respect, of their character and capacity. Defeat would have meant ruin and perhaps subjection and dismemberment. Victory was, therefore, more than a victory over Austria-Hungary; it was the triumph of the new Italian over the ignominious past, over the "disorderly, ignorant Italian, unpunctual, mentally old, rhetorical in literature, haughty when successful and flaccid in misfortune, domineering when on top and servile when he loses."<sup>1</sup> In this victory the national soul came of age and the brag of youth gave way to the quiet achievement of manhood. It is this fact which makes the history of Italy after the war so different from that which went before—different not so much in degree as in quality and significance.

Ignorant foreigners accuse modern Italy of imperialism. Nothing could be more absurd. Many people in Italy talk imperially, a few dream imperially, but none think or act imperially and the nation to-day does not possess the qualifications for

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<sup>1</sup> Prezzolini, "Vittorio Veneto" *La Voce*, Rome.



successful imperialism. To begin with, the Italians are not a military people. Individually they like a fight; collectively they detest war and are the last in the world to be taken in by phantoms of sham glory. The military have small prestige among them.

Never since the days of the legions had all the Italians stood shoulder to shoulder in a common crisis. Consequently there prevailed in some foreign countries and in a few Italians the mistaken idea that the Italians did not dare make war and could not if they would. The Italian is individually capable of unbounded heroism but cannot be dominated and disciplined by an external tradition; unless he be fired from within he soon grows indifferent. There is small wonder that foreign martinets should think ill of him when Giovanni Giolitti himself is reported to have remarked that Italians would never fight!

The country had been forced into the war by a far-sighted minority. Difference of opinion among its groups prevented them from presenting a united moral front to the neutralists. A large part of the educated classes was friendly to Germany or at least opposed to war. The masses were for peace—but their opinion did not count. To them the war was a horrible and stupid device of the government like taxes, to be avoided if possible and submitted to when necessary. Out of the three elements—the *intellectuals*, divided but enthusiastic, the *educated hostile*, and the *uneducated passively unwilling*—an enormous army had to be made. Common sense would have taught that the first and greatest

problem was the creation of national *morale* through discussion and propaganda. But common sense is precisely the quality which the Italian governing classes conspicuously lack.

### THE WAR GOVERNMENT

The men of the Italian Government admirably represented that mixture of limited intelligence, rhetoric and political cunning which had characterized the official history of United Italy. They did not speak the same language as the common people. They did not speak even the language of practical politics. They ignored economics. Balance of power, control of the Adriatic, Trent and Trieste, the national past, these were their symbols and the objects of their thoughts. Now the common people, who made up the bulk of the army, cared nothing for balance of power and were ignorant of the national past. Trent and Trieste might have awakened a response in them, had not the preceding statesmen, in homage to the Triple Alliance, resolutely repressed any outward manifestations of Irredentist sympathy. Many Southern Italians had only vaguely heard of Austria. Thousands and thousands of the peasants consistently considered their Austrian opponent less as an enemy than as a fellow victim.

Any people will fight a defensive war with vigor. To carry on a long and costly offensive campaign a people must be nourished morally. Democracy, world peace, ideal values, these were the baits offered the soldiers in other western countries. But the Italian leaders could not instill faith in any of

these things because they lacked this faith. They, therefore, began the war, not by an expression of solidarity with oppressed humanity, but by a declaration of limited nationalistic aims expressed in the memorable phrase, sacred egoism.

The absence of a united country behind them furnished a kind of excuse for the statesmen and they were always worried by the difficulties of handling a hostile, secretly neutralist Chamber of Deputies. The real government—so far as parliamentary opposition would allow—was handed over to the army in the person of the commander in chief.

A military government is by definition the worst possible government; a military government weakened by civilian interference was what Italy actually had up until the fall of General Cadorna. For the general, having been granted power, took advantage of it to the utmost and when in 1916 Prime Minister Salandra attempted to withdraw what he had given, he discovered that he had erected an idol whose stature greatly surpassed his own. It was the Premier and not the commander in chief who withdrew.

### THE COUNTRY

The chief aim of the early cabinets was to keep the war from weighing too heavily on the civilians and in this they certainly succeeded. Nowhere else in warring Europe was one so little conscious of the presence of distress. Soldiers were almost always transferred from place to place by night and everything was done to limit the contact between soldiers and civilians to the strictly necessary.

This system of deceiving the people and keeping it occupied in unimportant matters completely harmonized with the conduct of the rulers during all the years of Italian unity. They had, in the words of General Capello, "ended by wearing away all those forms of thought and activity upon which the country had risen to be an independent nation without substituting anything else."<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact the masses were slower to swallow the official versions of events than were the middle classes, who showed exceptional capacity in persuading themselves that things were as they wished them to be. Government and Headquarters began by masking the facts from the nation and ended by deceiving themselves. "The middle classes believed the common people lacked spirit because they did not know the people. Really the people had more spirit and more power of resistance than the middle classes."<sup>3</sup>

There is no real strength or security in falsehood, yet for more than two years the account of the war, forced on Italians and offered to the better informed foreign world, was largely false. I ought to know, for I helped to create such a false impression. No other account was tolerated. The importance of Italy's part in the war—measured by the number of enemy divisions she was holding engaged on her front—was never great until after the Russian revolution. Yet men pointed with immense pride and waste of words to Cadorna's eleven victories! Italy to be sure was doing her best against intolerable odds. It was really not her fault if all well-informed, military men and many civilians—not to

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<sup>2</sup> Luigi Capello, *Note di Guerra*, vol. i. Treves, Milan, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> Prezzolini, *Vittorio Veneto*.

mention the soldiers who had taken part!—realized that only two or at most three of these vaunted eleven were victories at all and they extremely costly!

Four groups of opinion opposed the Italian war. There were the *political neutralists*, many of whom held high places in the administration; the *clerical neutralists*, friendly to autocracy and Austria-Hungary; the *financial neutralists* linked to their money bags in Germany; and the *socialist neutralists*, opposed to all capitalistic wars. These neutralists coöperated to a certain extent in damaging the war cause. But to suppose that there was more hostility to the war among the civilians than in the army is surely an error. Only, the malcontents behind the lines had a freer hand and the false official versions of events gave them their chance of discrediting the war. To the official press they opposed the true verbal accounts of wounded soldiers and the clandestinely obtained bulletins of the Austro-Hungarian headquarters. And in the stifling attitude of falsehood that prevailed, their exaggerations seemed like truth. The Russian Revolution showed how peace might be obtained. Gradually the neutralist influence in favor of speedy peace spread. Soldiers who went home on leave returned to preach rebellion, and socialist literature, prohibited by the officers, circulated in secret. Not all the army chaplains were as patriotic as they should have been.

The remedy prescribed by Cadorna was not education but greater repression. He seems to have considered war weariness a form of deliberate per-



## TRIAL BY FIRE

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niciousness. Let the censors be more thorough! If need be, let all letters from home be destroyed! Let the official lie be made obligatory and all who differ be sent to prison! Let rebels be decimated in cold blood! Let leave to go home be suspended! Such were the ideas harbored by this twentieth century soldier. Obviously a government that had attempted to erect such a terrorism within the country would not have lasted a month. No amount of violence has ever succeeded in establishing a lie. The real answer was not in less connection between the soldiers and the population but a change in the entire policy toward the country. Not more censorship but the whole truth!

When disaster finally revealed the truth the civilians, who had been deliberately taught to consider the war no concern of theirs, stared at the reality aghast and speedily set about remedying it. That part of the military energy which had been employed in hiding the facts was released for military purposes. But the greater responsibility for the *débâcle* of Caporetto lay undoubtedly with him who imposed insane methods of conducting modern war.

### THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Nominally, the King of Italy is the Commander in Chief of the Italian forces on land and sea. The actual commander bears the modest title of Chief of Staff. But the Italian war had not been long in progress before it became evident that the Chief of Staff intended that the glory and responsibility of commanding should be concentrated in him and none other. And in Italy, where stark uncompromis-



ing spirits are rare, this fact alone served to create for him a kind of distinction.

Lieutenant General Count Luigi Cadorna, one of the seniors in the Italian military hierarchy, was already well toward the end of his career. He had been kept out of the Libyan War because Giolitti, then Prime Minister, did not like him. Cadorna had no particular military aureole and in choosing him the government had necessarily run some risk. But there was no one else in sight. And Cadorna, who never doubted himself and accepted power as a tribute due, entered on his office with "a vehement passion akin to fanaticism."<sup>4</sup>

He had large military gifts, but they were not precisely the sort needed. He lacked imagination and he lacked luck and without these no general has ever had great success.

The task before him was heavy enough for any one's shoulders: to prepare and conduct the military operations of an unmilitary nation in an offensive war, the first great struggle of its history, whose outcome would be solidification or ruin. He had to overcome the hesitancy, parsimony and inertia of a bureaucratic government. The scarce patriotism of the Italian people itself constituted a grave weakness. Strange country where one could hear men expressing hope of defeat in order that their trials might soon be over! Such patriotism as existed was largely regional. Moral cohesion between the various classes and the various regions was slight. The task of education, of propaganda had been dumped by the Government on the army at the

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<sup>4</sup> Aldo Valori, *La Guerra Italo-Austriaca*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1920.

front. Instead of carrying it out Cadorna undertook to govern Italy. He lacked faith in the government at Rome and strove and largely succeeded in creating a rival government around the Headquarters in Udine. From his stronghold there he dictated to the country, choosing not only the generals but the Minister of War as well, inspiring the press through a servile Press Bureau, and spreading his spies throughout the country. Since he would tolerate no strong man about him, the assistants of his choosing were unable to relieve him of any of the enormous task. Much of it, therefore, and especially the propaganda in the army, simply remained undone.

The bearer of such responsibility is necessarily a tyrant and Cadorna was by nature domineering. As a fanatical conservative and hater of France he could not be expected to understand the politics of a war in which France and Italy were allies. In the group about him the flatterers prevailed. The newspapers even went to the extent of saying that without Cadorna the war never could have been fought. The situation was novel: Cadorna indirectly inspired the press and the press exalted Cadorna. There was not a single dissonant note, not a breath of criticism. The Press Bureau served less to inform the country than to applaud the acts of the commander. Revolt on the part of individual journalists was indeed useless. Those who revolted were unwelcome at the front. Cadorna did not believe in giving out too much news. The war was what he, Cadorna, said it was, and outside the official bulletins there was, so far as the country was

concerned, no truth. Thus grew the legend of the eleven victories.<sup>5</sup> No wonder the Austrians felt no cause for alarm.

The dangers inherent in the unlimited authority of such a commander were evident. Cadorna did not understand modern war.

I remember seeing him for the first time during the war in a little church at Udine where he attended mass regularly. Father Semeria, his confessor, was preaching. And at the time I wrote this, which now seems to explain something of the faith Italians had in him which to later vision seems so misplaced:

In the front row, nearest the nave and squarely facing the pulpit, sits a man, his massive head with its scanty grey hair drooping forward a little over the somewhat heavy figure. The face hints at the qualities which have made the man a leader.

The most apparent of these is will power. The sheer force of volition in that nose, mouth and chin almost startles one. It is a masterful face and domineering. The position of the figure indicates a cautious nature—or rather, a conservative nature with a tendency toward aloofness. Back of this conservatism, this sense of aristocracy, burns the fire of limitless enthusiasm. The features seem old, but as you look at them intensely they melt in the burning light behind, all youthful and glowing, in the passion of a nature whose religion and patriotism are violent, impetuous, even devouring were they not contained within that cold crust of will. Throughout this man's life self control has been obtained only by persistent effort.

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<sup>5</sup> Lest I seem to exaggerate, I quote an excellent authority, who writes, "There was something not quite clear, unpleasant, in the mystery that the official circles kept around the real course of the operations, in the empty complacency of the praise furnished by the newspapers, in the suspicion against every one who showed a desire to see and speak clearly." Valori, *Ibid.*

### THE PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS

The character of the professional officers was that of ordinary Italians, their corps spirit that of old Piedmont, their training (as far as possible) that of modern Germany. Unfortunately neither old Piedmont nor contemporary Prussia at all resembles the rest of Italy and neither the corps spirit nor the training was adapted to the Italian character. Southern Italians especially are hostile to the spirit of blind obedience and formal discipline which the professional officers first imbibed and then strove to instill into their charges. During the war the bulk of the infantry—"queen of battles"—was recruited from the South. Consequently there was from the outset a deep gulf between the professionals and the reserve officers and privates which no one thought it necessary to bridge. The professionals took it for granted that the bulk of the nation would bend to their will and, therefore, treated their soldiers with a strong hand and the reserve officers with a kind of cool disdain. The Italian is not a German. He has no real military tradition and no civil discipline to carry over into military life. He resents coercion not actively but as a beast of burden which no amount of blows can force to obey a command. He must be led by active affection and example. He reveres the individual officer, not the rank the officer represents, and in consequence feels no need to obey any one incapable of inspiring him with reverence. This is a weakness but it is one with which the Italian officers should have been prepared to cope. Unfortunately they did not deem it necessary.

The striking thing about the Italian generals, as about their colleagues in other countries, was their aloofness from contemporary life. They seem to have inhabited a strange and wonderful world, like some old monastic set surrounded by a profane society which they did not understand and secretly despised. Nearly all were inexperienced. When the accident of war threw the power into their hands they were determined to make the most of it. All their lives they had waited and served . . . in expectation of this moment. What wonder if they abused their power? Naturally many of the older generals and colonels were hopelessly inefficient. They had come to their rank in time of peace; they had grown old in a profession which frowns on imagination even in the young and rarely recruits the best within a country. But in judging their performance in the field we must remember that the position of any commander under Cadorna was anything but pleasant. They had been trained to feel with, not against the Central Empires. They certainly hindered, with their excessive caution, the first Italian advance which should have gone much farther than it did. Nevertheless it is hard to believe in the impartiality of a mediocre general like Cadorna who found it necessary during the first twenty-nine months of warfare to "torpedo" (relieve of their commands) 217 generals, 255 colonels and 335 majors. And if the number was excessive the manner was even worse. Mere captains and majors were asked for secret reports on the relative capacity of their own immediate superiors. Generals who had spent a lifetime in



uniform were torpedoed without a hearing on printed blanks whereon everything but the name had been prepared beforehand. Commanders in the field, generals and colonels and majors engaged in the actual fighting came to fear and hate the "enemy behind" more than the enemy in front. All sense of security or support faded when a lieutenant general might be relieved without a chance to defend himself on the word of a conceited young staff officer.

In the commands officer followed officer in rapid procession. In the course of one year the Eighth Army Corps was commanded by no less than seven generals. Instead of contracting those personal relations which in Italy are essential to the success of any undertaking, the officers so treated lost all authority and the soldiers sang ironic songs about their commanders.<sup>6</sup>

Generally speaking, the Italian generals were men of high character and upright, if rigid, mind. The lot of professional officers in Italy is none too magnificent and they are largely sustained by hope of glory. But Cadorna refused them even this. He monopolized all the glory that there was to be had. He signed the daily bulletins and his name alone appeared in the newspapers. If a plan succeeded he got the publicity and the praise. If it failed, the local commander was swiftly and silently torpedoed and bore away the blame into retirement. Most foreigners and millions of Italians had never heard of any general but Cadorna.

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<sup>6</sup> One of these in the Neapolitan dialect which I shall not dare to translate, runs: "*Nu fessu è partito. Nu fessu è arrivato, Sarà silurato Senza pietà.*"



But worst of all, Cadorna's treatment of his officers weakened the *esprit de corps* in the reserve officers where it was the most needed and gave far too much power to the general staff.

Technically the officers of the Italian general staff constituted the intellectual flower of the army. Their plans were reasonably well made and the assistance they gave the generals valid. But they abused their power. As the members of the Operations Bureau they practically ran the war. They made it hard for all the other officers and tyrannized over men their superior in rank and perhaps in ability—certainly in personal sacrifice. They are accused of toadying to Cadorna in order to uphold their own power and influence, and of "filtering" important information intended for the Chief of Staff under pretext of preserving his Olympian calm. General Capello, probably the most brilliant of the Italian generals, accuses the Operations Bureau of having tried to prevent him, while Commander of the Second Army, from having personal contact with Cadorna, his immediate superior.

The attitude of the professional officer is nearly the same in all countries and certainly the officers of the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany (with all of whom I had considerable personal experience) resemble each other more closely than they resemble the civilians of their several nations. In Italy their formalism proved at the beginning a grave drawback. They considered the war their personal property and monopolized the administrative posts, not from lack of courage but from love of authority. Indeed they were uni-

## TRIAL BY FIRE

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formly courageous and possessed a certain moral rectitude rare in a commercial world. But they were expected to uphold a system and tradition utterly unsuited to the men they had to lead and in consequence, except in those cases where their personal insight corrected the fault of the system, they faced grave difficulties.

### THE RESERVE OFFICERS

The corps of professional officers was, however, extremely small and most of the leading in actual combat was done by educated civilians, only a small proportion of whom had received any systematic military training. "They were generally rich young idlers, or students or young professional men; anything but enthusiastic over the war, capable," in the words of General Capello,<sup>7</sup> "rather of an instant's sudden heroic act than of the long, patient willing service that really accomplishes something."

The children of the decaying aristocracy had been taught to despise manual work. Many of the rich had found safe berths as chauffeurs which they left to become officers only with regret. Poverty had taught the young professional men anything but devotion to an ideal. Italian middle class life, Italian life in general, is not a good schooling in responsibility.

Naturally there were many glorious exceptions, especially among the volunteer officers; some men naturally like war, others force themselves to accomplish its tasks from religious fervor or stoic devotion to duty.

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<sup>7</sup> Capello, *Note di Guerra*.

And as in other armies, between the civilian officers and the professionals there was considerable distrust which often increased to downright ill feeling. The latter as a class had the better *morale*. The former knew themselves the more intelligent and chafed at the rigid mediocrity of official practices, resenting their position in the trenches exposed to constant danger while the professionals (who were supposed to have looked forward to the war) remained behind the lines in safe administrative positions or were speedily promoted to higher commands.

### THE COMMON SOLDIERS

The real actors of the Italian war were the infantrymen. Drawn from the common people, the peasants and artisans and workers, they were true to the traditions of their country and never forfeited their individuality or submitted willingly to discipline. To the end they remained passionately sentimental and skeptical at the same time, reasoners and ignorant, without real zeal but capable of enormous endurance and highly susceptible to good leadership and personal example. In many cases the indolence of the Italian soldier makes him prefer danger to the labor of deepening his trench or strengthening his shelters. At other times he takes to his hole in the ground like a mole and seems to forget why he happens to be living in a Cave. Usually his patriotism and sense of duty are weak. But he attacks with amazing vigor, has a courage that responds to any demands and when aroused, shrinks from nothing.

## TRIAL BY FIRE

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He can bear suffering and privation beyond anything imaginable but he cannot hate an anonymous foe. Withal he fought and fought well, though without conviction; fought through pride, fear and force of example, as men always fight; fought through "the bellicose instinct latent in a people derived from a mixture of conquering nations, Romans, Etruscans, Gauls, Arabs, Normans,"<sup>8</sup> and one should add, Germans. As the months wore on the Italian soldier became a hardened combatant, an expert and tried veteran. But "the more he became aware of his progress in his sanguinary art, the more sharply he felt the desire to get out of it."<sup>9</sup> Gradually, as his patience wore away and the war continued without tangible result or hope of victory, his combativity weakened and at Caporetto he ceased to fight altogether. The invasion that followed cut at the deepest emotion of his heart, at his family feeling, and the sense of fighting to defend his women and children turned him into a convinced warrior. Then for perhaps the first time he understood something of the meaning of patriotism.

### THE PREPARATIONS

Critics are divided in praising the actual preparations made for entering the war or in blaming the lack of greater foresight and common sense which resulted in meager and insufficient equipment.

Italian intervention became probable in August, 1914, when the government greeted the outbreak of European war with a declaration of armed neutrality. For the first time in history united Italy was

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<sup>8</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

to measure her strength in a death struggle. Her lack of preparation was painfully apparent.

Poverty had bred economy and prevented the military resources of the country from attaining the development necessary to the rank of "Great Power" among the armed plutocracies of Europe. For reasons of economy, the number of establishments capable of producing war material was not immediately increased in the needed proportions. For the same reasons only thirty-five per cent of the nation's manhood had been trained to arms. The industries seemed indeed unequal to the task of furnishing war material for a great struggle. Fortunately the Italian industries possessed capacities for production which, once the purse strings were loosed, proved the salvation of the country.

On a peace footing the army numbered about 320,000 men. Between August, 1914, and May, 1915, the army was reorganized. The responsibility for this work was divided between General Cadorna and General Zupelli, the Minister of War. It was perhaps inevitable that all their predictions and preparations should fall ludicrously short of the mark. They expected a short struggle. Italy had promised to enter the war at a moment when events were looking up for the Allies and a Russian invasion of Hungary seemed imminent. Italy had only to strike the last decisive blow. To finance the war Baron Sonnino contracted for a loan of 50,000,000 pounds sterling from Great Britain! The military preparations were drawn on the same scale. Cadorna was not a man to learn from others and the lessons of the first nine months fighting on the



Western Front were largely wasted. At the time of entering a struggle against a powerful and experienced enemy, the inexperienced Italian army possessed almost no heavy guns, next to no guns of medium caliber, not half enough light artillery, only six hundred machine guns (or two per regiment) and only 750,000 spare rifles. It had no gas, no hand grenades, no masks, no helmets, few *camions*. Enemy barbed wire was, in the conception of the leaders, to be destroyed by nitro-gelatine in portable tubes or cut by volunteers with hand pincers! Yet this was the condition of an army that set out to attack a thoroughly trained enemy, entrenched in almost impregnable mountain positions, well provided with all kinds of modern war machinery, along one of the most unequal frontiers it is possible to imagine, and whom only an invasion in great depth could wound mortally. The outlook was not pleasant and if it had been thoroughly understood by the Italian leaders might have cooled their ardor for war. Yet, in the words of General Capello, if the Italians did not feel equal to attacking the Austrian positions they "should not have made war but stayed at home."

### HOW CADORNA MADE WAR

The idea of an offensive war against Austria-Hungary had never entered the head of the Italian General Staff and the plan for such a war did not exist.<sup>10</sup> The first task of an Italian commander was therefore the conception of such a plan. What was this plan? In the absence of definite

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<sup>10</sup> Capello, *Note di Guerra*, Vol. I.



knowledge we can only conjecture. There is no problem which has so perplexed Italian military commentators. An anonymous newspaper writer<sup>11</sup> has stated that the choice of the East or Julian frontier as the principal front was obligatory, that it was "the initial plan of the Entente which aimed at blocking the Austro-Hungarian army in Hungary between the Italians and the Russians." The chief reason for skepticism regarding this plan is not its apparent insanity but what we know of the Italian political conception of the war, which desired the defeat but not the destruction of the Dual Monarchy, the checking but not the humiliation of Germany; and resolutely refused any coöperation with the Serbs or any naval action liable to endanger the fleet, which had to be saved for the future. General Capello speaks of an initial disposition on the part of the General Staff to "dictate peace at Vienna," but this was only a pipe dream and soon gave way to a new conception, almost as absurdly restricted as the other was swollen: the taking of Trieste and an advance into the Eastern mountains until a good defensive line could be reached. But even for such limited ambitions means and conception were lacking and by the time the war material had become adequate (1917), the spirit of the men had broken. Beyond these ideas, analysis of Cadorna's military operations fails to reveal any thoroughly conceived plan whatever.

Cadorna did not believe in a plan, and consideration of the unbroken front led him to deny the utility of strategy. "Henceforth this is not the

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<sup>11</sup> Svastica, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, December 9, 1920.

time of strategy," he is reported to have said.<sup>12</sup> "I attack everywhere and if in some spot I break through, that is where I shall try to advance." The history of the Italian war is the history of the way in which hard facts imposed themselves on Cadorna's superstitions. He did not believe in trench warfare.<sup>13</sup> Yet never was army more immobile than his within its trenches and not all its attacks succeeded in changing the situation. He counted on reaching Vienna—and remained for two and a half years within gun shot of the Italian frontier. He believed exclusively in frontal attack—and the only real victories of the war, including his own, were a result of maneuver. He disbelieved in the Trentino offensive in 1916—and it came. He considered possession of the hilltops enough to stop any offensive—and in the Autumn of 1917 the Austro-Germans, ignoring the heights and pressing resolutely through the valleys, surpassed his defenses in a few hours. He did not even believe in this offensive long after the definite plan of attack had fallen into his hands. And when everything had proved him wrong and his army was retreating in disorder, he laid the blame on his troops!

The Italian conduct of the war was skin deep; the infantry attacked not where the enemy was weakest or most vulnerable but where he was strongest. Lack of munitions and divided aims prevented any operations from being carried to a decisive conclusion and the excessive prudence which in Cadorna's mind alternated with a kind of crazy

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<sup>12</sup> Fortunato Marazzi, *Splendori ed Ombre della Nostra Guerra*, Caddeo, Milan, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Capello, *Note di Guerra*, vol. i.

rashness, caused him to hesitate and draw back just when boldness might have brought victory and tangible results.

So simple did this method of relentless pressure seem that every one supposed it temporary. But the months went on in vain endeavor to accomplish what, considering the methods, would have taken decades or centuries.

The Italian combatants, conscious of their inferiority in position and munitions, thoroughly aware of the impossibility of wounding the enemy mortally by the simple process of foot by foot conquest, became reluctant to sacrifice themselves before a stone wall they had no adequate means to batter down or fly over and which their leader resolutely abstained from trying to go around. The officers lost all faith in the higher commanders and carried out orders half-heartedly. Officers and men were united in the pessimistic belief that, if left to itself, the Italo-Austrian war might go on indefinitely without a victory. Cadorna's method brought no results and inspired no hopes of speedy conclusion.

What was Cadorna's method? In February, 1915, the general had distributed to the army a pamphlet written by himself and containing tactical instructions expressly raised to the grade of orders. The aim of this pamphlet was to explain the system which the *generalissimo* was about to adopt, of frontal attack. There was to be no maneuver, no waiting. Upon the declaration of war the Italians in the plains were to rush headlong at the Austrians in the fortified hills. This was the system actually adopted during twenty-nine months of warfare.

At the beginning courage was supposed to take the place of artillery and machine guns. "Barbed wire entanglements should be broken by human breasts," General Vanzo replied to General Capello, who complained of lack of artillery. And so for nearly two years Cadorna sacrificed his best men and best officers, his volunteers and highly trained Alpine troops against the implements of scientific barbarism. And they went, time after time, unfalteringly, until the best were dead and the spirit had gone out of the rest. When the time came that some would no longer fight well, the others, the brave, were used and used again, until they revolted against the injustice that put a premium on cowardice. Any real advance cost fearful losses. Cadorna in his bulletins called this "slow progress" and slow it was! For every yard of advance a hundred men bled.

But there was worse. "Frontal attack was an antidiluvian method but it might have given some success had it not remained an end in itself."<sup>14</sup> But it never led to anything and to many of the best Italian generals, Capello among them, the lack of real strategical conception seemed suicidal.

As the months wore away the men learned the hard game of the war. But Cadorna, to the end of his career, persisted in small attacks without specific purpose. When he had collected munitions enough for one modern offensive, he undertook two, and the result was that both had to suffer an untimely arrest for lack of projectiles and the results were almost nil.

To have bettered their tactics the Italians needed

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<sup>14</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*.

only to "follow the Allies or copy the enemy."<sup>15</sup> But Cadorna was too well satisfied with Cadorna. After the fatal half victory of the Bainsizza in 1917 a bare month before the catastrophe, the *generalissimo* coolly referred to his own maneuver (one of the few he undertook) as "the greatest of all those carried out during the war by the various belligerent armies."<sup>16</sup>

In a sense the lack of leadership made for the glory of the soldiers, but it was paid for in the blood of many who might far better have lived.

## TOWARDS DISASTER

The Italians went into the conflict on a burst of enthusiasm exhaled from the volunteers and propagandists and flung back in echo from the entire country, which welcomed any relief from the intolerable tension of the days of neutrality.

The forward advance began joyously. In a bound the Italians were over the frontier. Then they stopped. The first opposition completely bluffed the leaders and they set about besieging positions which they might easily have carried with a rush. During the first week of warfare the Austrians had on the Julian front between Monte Nero and the sea only twelve battalions<sup>17</sup> and during this time only excessive slowness prevented the Italians from taking Trieste. Seeing the Italians hesitate, however, the Austrians took heart and began desperately fortifying the positions they had previously decided

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<sup>15</sup> Capello, *Note di Guerra*, vol. i.

<sup>16</sup> See Aldo Valori. See also, on the system of small local attacks, Ettore Vigano, *La Nostra Guerra*. Le Monnier, Florence, 1902.

<sup>17</sup> Karl F. Nowak, *Den Weg zur Katastroph*.



to evacuate. Each successive Italian attack, though more vigorous than its predecessors, found the Austrians better prepared to resist it. In a few weeks the war had practically become stationary in the mountains, along the Isonzo and on the Carso, where it remained with little change for more than two years.

Except in moments of offensive the Austrians held the front against Italy with not more than one-third of their forces (15 to 25 divisions) <sup>18</sup> until such time as the crushing of Serbia and the Russian collapse enabled them to bring against Italy their entire strength. In October, 1915 they had on the Julian front only 147 infantry battalions against 312 Italian.<sup>19</sup>

But the unusual strength of their positions, the Italian lack of artillery and munitions and Cadorna's stubbornness more than compensated the Austrians for their lack of men. The first year's bloody fighting on the Julian front cost Italy 54,000 dead, 160,000 wounded and 21,000 prisoners.<sup>20</sup> Six weeks of autumn combats on positions near Oslavia which were defended by two or three regiments cost half the strength of several Italian brigades. And all to no purpose.

The Italians lived in a spasm of continual cruel attack against man and nature. The young officers began to grow skeptical and every one, by one of those rapid changes so native to the Italian nature, fell from irreflective enthusiasm into unreasonable

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<sup>18</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*.

<sup>19</sup> Capello, *Note di Guerra*.

<sup>20</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*. All my figures of the Italian losses are taken from this work.



depression. Even during the winter there was little rest and the troops, unused to trench life and temperamentally opposed to its immobility (though preferable to the continual offensives), wore themselves out in struggles against cold, rain and mud. The impression of excessive and unnecessary hardship was increased in the men who went home now on leave and saw the lives of the civilians in the big cities unchanged, theaters and restaurants in full blast, food abundant, many professional officers holding easy jobs far from the danger zone, and the general tendency to treat the war as a mere incident. The men from the terrible Julian front, moreover, met their comrades from other sectors and learned that in these localities military life lacked most of the horrors they had known; naturally they felt themselves badly treated.

During the winter the first cases of insubordination occurred.

Spring sunshine brought better spirits and the threat of a large scale Austro-Hungarian "punitive offensive," the so-called *Strafe-expedition* in the Trentino. The defensive powers of the Italian soldiers had yet to be tried and this alone might have counseled caution. But Cadorna did not believe in an enemy offensive, considering that the Austrians lacked the necessary forces, and when the attack came, preceded and accompanied by such a hell of projectiles as the Italians had never seen, it swept the defense before it. The badly prepared lines of General Brusati were smashed and the defenders reacted feebly; in a few days 45,000 were taken prisoners.

Cadorna hastily strengthened his forces and succeeded so well that five days after the offensive began he was able to pit 250 against 188 Austrian battalions<sup>21</sup> but they were not able immediately to stop the Austrian momentum. Cadorna in the meantime collected with great skill a new army in the plain. Luckily the veterans from the Isonzo, once they entered action, held firm, and news from the Russian front finally halted the offensive. In addition to the prisoners the Italians lost 35,000 dead and 75,000 wounded. A counter offensive gave them back some of the ground lost but could not undo the impression of mortal danger that had swept the country. Cadorna of course claimed that the Austrians had paid dearly for their temerity but his losses were against him and his prestige weakened. He was, however, strong enough to overthrow Prime Minister Salandra, who was attempting to run the war on partisan lines.

The jolt in the Trentino was good for Italy. The soldiers recovered their *morale*, the country became momentarily aware of the war and the output of the war industries was greatly increased.

August 1916, marked the high water mark of Cadornian warfare. Guns and munitions were almost sufficient and the men's *morale* had not yet been irrevocably destroyed. The choice of local executive for the offensive, General Luigi Capello, proved to be excellent. The result was Cadorna's masterpiece, the taking of Gorizia. It was an authentic victory and brilliant. But the offensive effort was spread too far south and means were lacking for

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<sup>21</sup> Enrico Barone, *Storia Militare della Nostra Guerra*, Laterza, Bari, 1919.

pushing the victory to strategic conclusions. The losses, 45,000 dead, 112,000 wounded, 20,000 prisoners were not judged excessive considering the difficulties to be overcome and the results achieved.

Unfortunately the triumph of Gorizia had no morrow and the remainder of the year was wasted in useless costly attacks.

In October, 1916, I first came in contact with the vast body of discontent in the army and was warned that the men would one day try to end the war. Already popular wit had produced the ironical songs against Cadorna which became famous. Desertion was very common and revolts had been repressed with measures of extreme harshness.<sup>22</sup>

The winter of 1916-1917 seemed to break the army *morale* altogether. Especially among the Southern Italians desertions became the rule. Hundreds of Sicilians failed to return from their leave and aided by local opinion, managed to elude the police sent to find them. Others returned full of rebellion and Socialist criticisms of the war.

The Wilson Note (December 8, 1916) may have had some influence. "The objects which the statesmen of the belligerents on both sides have in mind in this war are virtually the same as stated in general terms to their own people and to the world"—what was this but an authentic confirmation of a suspicion which had already risen in the mind of many a soldier?

The Russian Revolution was a tremendous disorganizer of armies. Although the Italian author-

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<sup>22</sup> Viganò, *La Nostra Guerra*.

ities endeavored to credit the report that the Russians had turned out the Czar from sheer zeal in the allied cause, "it was clear that that great country had rebelled against its government because it wished to have nothing more to do with the war."<sup>23</sup>

Skepticism and weariness soon changed into hatred of Cadorna which he, blind to the commonest facts of nature, attributed exclusively to the Socialists. Country and army were only influencing each other reciprocally. The war—which had come to be considered Cadorna's war—was pressing too heavily on the nation's nerves and moral fiber. The general, in a series of letters, coldly warned Prime Minister Boselli of the weakening *morale* and asked him to introduce a system of political persecution throughout the country. The Prime Minister made no answer. We may thank Cadorna if we know that owing to his methods, in May 1917, 111 men were condemned to be shot "and this without counting the numerous cases in which for a necessary immediate example, we had to come to shooting."

The entrance of the United States into the war found the conservative Italian leaders both uneasy and skeptical and was not grasped in its significance by the common people.

The well planned offensive of May, 1917, which brought some territorial gain, was the occasion for heavy desertion and was followed by a series of little rebellions. The June offensive against the Ortigara chain of mountains in the Trentino was a ghastly failure costing 37,000 men. In July an

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<sup>23</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*.

entire brigade revolted and twenty-eight of the rebels were killed outright. About the same time the Turin munition workers rebelled.

Cadorna had reason for alarm. It had begun to be clear that a Russian collapse was probable which would clear the way for moving of the bulk of the Austro-Hungarian forces to the Italian front. The Italians at this time lacked spirit and confidence to fight the enemy on equal terms. So for the first time, the Italian leaders forgot their "duel with the enemy," their "sacred egoism," and asked for allied help. At the same time Cadorna began to look for a defensive line in anticipation of a coming offensive. The Allies, seeing no reason why any expedition of their troops to Italy should not be followed by Germany without changing the situation, and being unwilling to exchange the French plains for the Italian mountains, limited their aid to a certain number of medium caliber batteries.

The strength of the Italian armies was equal to anything which the Central Empires could immediately bring against them and their equipment seemed sufficient. The Allies therefore asked for an Italian offensive and as Cadorna desired to reach a good defensive line, the realization of both wishes might be found in the occupation of the entire Bainsizza Plateau lying beyond the River Isonzo between Tolmino and Gorizia and limited by the Valley of Chiapovano, through which ran the only railroad that united these two important centers for many miles back. Occupation of the plateau with Tolmino would have closed the doors to easy Austrian offensives and by cutting the Chiapovano rail-



road would practically have divided the Austrian forces on the Julian front in two. Such complete occupation might have been accomplished had not Cadorna divided his effort in an unsuccessful attempt to take Mount Hermada on the Carso near the sea. Most of the Bainsizza was therefore brilliantly occupied by General Capello with the Second Army, but the Chiapovano railroad was not reached and neither Monte San Gabriele above Gorizia nor Tolmino was captured. Cadorna, who had begun the offensive with a stock of 4,500,000 shells, after wasting many against the Hermada, called it off when nearly 3,000,000 had been expended.<sup>24</sup>

The Italian line was defensively weaker than it had been before the offensive. The center had gone ahead while the weak wings remained stationary. And as the Allies requested another offensive General Capello also favored a new attack to complete the work. When Cadorna, becoming cautious, refused, the Allies withdrew the greater part of their batteries.<sup>25</sup> And for some reason nothing serious was done. Part of General Capello's army of 800,000 men remained in weak positions in front of the open door of Tolmino and the larger part on the Bainsizza Plateau, or behind the open door, separated from the rest by roundabout communications and the River Isonzo. The reserves were nearly all grouped far to the south. The army *morale* was poor. There was no longer any hope in victory. Unknown to the leaders the soldiers had decided on "nonresistance to end the war."

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<sup>24</sup> E. Barone, *Storia della Guerra*.

<sup>25</sup> Luigi Capello, *Per la Verità*. Treves, Milan, 1920.



## CAPORETTO

At two o'clock in the morning of October 24 the Austro-German offensive of Tolmino-Caporetto, led by General Otto von Buelow, began. On October 22, Cadorna had remarked to General Cavaciocchi, commanding the Fourth Army Corps, that he believed a large enemy attack improbable . . . "but let it come . . . the Austrians and Germans will repent of it." Just five days later, on October 27, the *generalissimo* announced to the country that "the failure of portions of the Second Army to resist, cowardly retreating without fighting or ignominiously surrendering to the enemy" had permitted the Austro-German forces to break the left wing of the Julian Front. With a gasp of horror and of grief the country awoke from a dream of self-complacency to shuddering reality.

What had happened? No one could say. Retrospectively an explanation of the change would read something like this:

1. Italy entered the war with high spirits but without adequate preparation.

2. The cruel and fruitless methods of warfare adopted broke the *morale*.

3. At Caporetto, owing to rivalry between the generals and defective strategy, Italy was inevitably beaten on purely military grounds.

4. The circumstances of this defeat, given the lack of fighting spirit among the Italian troops, necessitated the retreat of the entire army.

5. Lack of *morale* turned this retreat into a military catastrophe.

Let us consider the general situation. The Austro-Germans had on the front of attack 4126 guns, which gave them considerable superiority in this respect. Numerically their strength was only 171 infantry battalions against which the Italians might have brought 253. But, owing to hopeless confusion and poor tactics, the assailants actually managed to put 129 battalions against 103. The Italian artillery, hampered by a thick mist, never fired! General Cadorna had failed to see that his orders were obeyed and General Capello had not thoroughly seconded his chief's ideas for the defense. General Badoglio commanding the 27th corps, where the army *morale* was weakest, seems to have disobeyed orders.<sup>26</sup> The commander of the Fourth Corps lost his head completely. As a matter-of-fact, "all the commanders and the staffs, from the highest to the lowest, had lost their heads."<sup>27</sup>

Lack of fighting spirit turned a bad beating into a general retreat. Cadorna realized during the action that he had at his disposal the means of victory, viz: a great superiority of men on strong positions. But the men would not stand. Some troops surrendered to the enemy singing, perhaps believing that similar conduct on the part of their adversaries was probable and would end the war. There were no orders and the first day's combats practically decided the battle. The second line gave way as readily as the first and retreat to the Piave became necessary to save the army.

There are thousands of witnesses alive to attest that bad *morale* turned the retreat into a rout.

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<sup>26</sup> Viganò, *La Nostra Guerra*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Generals and officers deserted their men in crowds and escaped in *camions* and automobiles. The worst instincts were aroused in the soldiers. Thousands threw away their arms and, transformed into a giant mob of over 1,000,000 soldiers and civilian refugees, under a frigid pelting rain, pursued by enemy airplanes, beat a retreat that resembled a flight and was the "greatest migration" that the world records accomplished in so short a time. Often thousands surrendered in mass. In this disaster of the Second Army, the Third Army, operating to the south, became necessarily involved. And all this "for exclusive fault of the leaders."

Strategically the Italians shortened their front to the southern edge of the mountains and the course of the River Piave. Italy was invaded and its existence threatened and the means of further resistance were greatly diminished. The Italians lost 250,000 prisoners, plus 100,000 more abandoned in the hospitals. Out of 2,062,000 in the fighting ranks 800,000 were lost to the army in a few days. Of the 1,100,000 men in line, 700,000 disappeared. In November the Italians faced the 400,000 Austro-Germans who tried to break the new line and complete the work of destruction, with barely 280,000 men.

The material losses included 3152 guns, 1732 trench mortars, 3000 machine guns, 1,000,000 rifles, 300,000 of which were new, 4000 *camions*, 150 airplanes, 73,000 draught animals and immense stores of everything, machinery, rolling stock, food, winter clothing valued at 6,000,000,000 *lire*. And there was nothing available at once to replace the losses.

## TRIAL BY FIRE

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No wonder the country staggered under the blow. Greater wonder that the people did not give way altogether. The depths of the national weakness had been revealed.

It is to General Cadorna's credit that he kept his head and eventually brought as much order as could be expected out of the retreat. Even before the temporary resistance on the Tagliamento River had been overcome, he made arrangements for a final decisive resistance on the Piave and then turned over the command to General Diaz, a dark horse.<sup>28</sup> It was high time.

## TRIAL BY FIRE

Both the immediate and underlying responsibilities go back to fifty years of bad government, of political corruption, of parliamentary dictatorships, of electoral lies, of lack of public schools, of deliberately, systematically obtained servility in all branches of the functionaries, of lack of dignity, strength and will in the representatives of the State.

So ran the published verdict on Caporetto of a volunteer "committee for national self-scrutiny." For perhaps the first time in fifty years the Italians were brought face to face with the truth without possibility of hiding or deforming or caricaturing it. They had accepted the risk of a giant war and so far they had largely failed! The actual danger was tremendous. Winter to be sure, was not far off and the Austro-Germans, a little surprised by their success, were coming on cautiously. But soon there

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<sup>28</sup> The Allied generals urged further retreat; to follow their advice, however strategically sound, would have meant ruin.

## IMMORTAL ITALY

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would be a new shock of arms and if the invaders could break the Piave line and press on to Milan the spirit of Italian resistance would be broken and Italy would virtually drop out of the war. The Allies were in no position to send a large relief force. If Italy went, France would be exposed on her flank and faced with nearly 1,000,000 Austrians. The situation looked desperate for France, if not for the Allies. The Americans were still untrained and far away. Could the Italians hold?

The struggle was essentially moral. It was not the Italian army, it was the Italian soul the Austrians must conquer. Or rather that the Italians must purify. Could they overcome their own worst selves, remedy those political defects which seemed to be throwing them forward into a future as ignominious as the past they had so laboriously risen from? Within each individual an old Italian struggled with the new. On the one hand servility, selfishness and skepticism; on the other will power, patriotism and self-sacrifice. The weak therefore urged immediate peace, submission to the enemy, a new alliance with Germany; the strong of whatever party and conviction, urged resistance to the end. Better to perish struggling than to continue as a "kept nation" under the shield of the Teutons. The strong prevailed; from north and south there was but one clear cry, resist.

The truth seemed to have transformed the Italians. "The good that Caporetto did to Italy will never be told enough. It seemed to give back to the country good sense, measure, humility, serious will, concord, accuracy in action, consciousness of what



it was doing."<sup>29</sup> We foreigners were confronted with a new people; the *Risorgimento*, Garibaldi, the Communes, ancient Rome became intelligible.

Prime Minister Boselli yielded the task of governing to Victor Emmanuel Orlando, a politician of elastic will and inspired tongue but capable of rising to great heights on popular support. Deputies of all the parties joined forces in the first *fascio* or band of national defense. The country not only became aware, it shook with the war and leaped to assist the soldiers. The old and unfit volunteered for active service, the men in the snug, safe places asked to be sent to the front and the new recruits, eighteen and nineteen years old, showed a calm will to sacrifice, a mature sense of responsibility and a crazy courage. The nearer one went to the front the higher ran men's spirits. While at headquarters aged generals debated the possibilities of further retreat, the men on the lines, young and old, were talking little and standing their ground, fighting with set teeth and dogged wills, holding back the invaders in the Venetian lagoons, along the Piave and across the low mountains.

All the rhetoric and boasting had vanished. The new generals, with the active assistance of the King, directed the army along lines just opposite to those followed by Cadorna. Instead of distrust and hostility, harmony reigned. Industry and soldiers worked together. Work was found for all who wished to help. And although the persons in the Operations Bureau remained about the same,<sup>30</sup> the

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<sup>29</sup> Prezzolini, "Vittorio Veneto," *La Voce*, Rome, 1919.

<sup>30</sup> See statement of Captain Lorenzoni in Capello, *Per la Verità*.



spirit had changed. Most grateful of all was the change in the common soldier.

He had never believed in the war, he had never hated his enemy, he had expressed his true feeling in a hundred mordant songs. Now something new stirred in him saying that he loved his country, his army, his invaded Italy. He fought for the first time with conviction, with a fierce courage and cool contempt for death—fought for his family and his honor. Shame was a spur to him. Never have I lived in contact with another so exalted body of humble heroism. In the fire of disaster the Italian iron, which the world expected to melt and flow, hardened to steel. In November 1917 modern Italy came of age and Austria-Hungary underwent the moral defeat that led later to her physical undoing.<sup>31</sup>

Italy saved herself, unaided. For while the Italians fought, the British and French divisions waited behind the lines, ready to enter action if the Italians broke, but inert. Foch and Plumer did not care to risk their troops in another *débâcle*. Thanks to their caution, the part played by the Allies in November 1917 in Italy was purely moral, similar to that later played by the American Red Cross.

Gradually the thwarted violence of the picked assailants—the Austrian Edelweiss division, the *Deutsche Alpenkorp* and the Prussian Guard—wore itself away and winter with its rain and snow came to bring relief.

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<sup>31</sup> In the triumph the navy had its share. On the night of December ninth occurred the sinking of the battleship *Wien* and the damaging of the *Budapesth* in Trieste harbor by a band of volunteers—the first of those tremendous feats which in the last year of war brought world-wide fame.

1918

In the fourth year of the war, victory raced with anarchy for the mastery of Europe and won.

In Italy this was a year of solemn endeavor and well won triumph. During the winter the army was reorganized. Half a million disorderly men, the mob of October, 1917, were again made into soldiers. After Caporetto something of the spirit of sneering revolt that had caused the disaster still remained. But in a few months General Capello, who was soon after relieved of his command, managed to put heart into these disorganized units and the Italian Second Army Corps which later distinguished itself in France under General Albricci, was made up of the military strikers and deserters of the *débâcle*. Amid the crowd of those who worked at the moral regeneration of the army, Gabriele D'Annunzio had a large part. But the men themselves were repentant.

Military education was simultaneously pushed forward and more schools founded in imitation of those of the Allies. The organization of the picked *Arditi* or storm troops, which had been begun under Cadorna, was carried out on a large scale. The methods of the Allies and of the enemy were studied, copied and in some cases bettered. The war industries received a remarkable boom and by October 1918, were employing over 900,000 persons of whom 200,000 were women. The activities of the American Red Cross, especially in the first months, were very helpful in restoring national confidence. Propaganda in the army was undertaken and many

little provisions to ease the soldiers' lives, which Cadorna had not thought necessary, were carried out meticulously.

Very important, too, was the reorganization of the Intelligence Bureau and the utilization of the rebellious feeling in the ranks of the enemy. The Czechoslovaks, Roumanians, Ruthenians and Istrians in the Austro-Hungarian ranks were openly mutinous and only waited an opportunity to desert. The political Pact of Rome, of April, 1918, permitted the further use of these deserters and even of the partially hostile Croats and Slovenes. Owing to inner disruption Austrian efficiency was greatly decreased. Although in June the Austrian army possessed 73 divisions with 960 infantry battalions against 61 Italian and Allied divisions, "the numerical superiority was more formal than real."<sup>32</sup> Internal conditions were terrible in the Dual Monarchy, food was lacking, discontent had become general. The influence of the Wilson messages of "self determination" in aiding and, as some observers believe, in directly causing the disruption of Austria-Hungary, was enormous.

For the Austro-Hungarian army to remain immobile in these circumstances was to court ruin. It was still possible to count on the hatred for Italy shared by the Germans and Majars and by a part at least, of the discontented Slavs. Logically the game ought to be risked on a single hand especially as it was supposed that the Central Empires still held many of the trumps. The German offensive in France seemed to be making steady headway. So the

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<sup>32</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*.

Austrian leaders with the approval of Ludendorff, decided on the "hunger offensive" which was to wipe Italy clean off the slate of their enemies. If it succeeded there was still a chance for the Central Empires.

The Austrian plan was extravagantly ambitious for it contemplated an offensive along a hundred mile front, but it had the approval of the German strategists and an advance in any spot would, owing to the unfavorable situation of the Italians, force them to retreat all along the line. It also gave ample employment for the superior numbers which the Austrians possessed. Some 600,000 men were put into line with 6000 guns. The Italians could not muster so many. But the Austrians were not counting on a stubborn resistance and actually issued two sets of orders, one to be used in case the Italians fought and the other in case they did not. Fortunately, the Italian *morale* was never so high.<sup>33</sup>

The Italian Supreme Command was none too confident and would have liked nothing so much as tranquillity. But the army was "spoiling" for an opportunity to redeem itself. The defense had been splendidly prepared and after the skillful counter bombardment ordered by the leaders during the first hours, the responsibility was left to the men. They bore the shock magnificently. Never before had Italians stood so sturdily on the defensive and although the Austrians had little difficulty in crossing the Isonzo under cover of their intense bom-

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<sup>33</sup> Valori, *Storia della Guerra*. Perhaps he exaggerates; consideration of the Italian losses, 11,000 dead, 29,000 wounded and 52,000 prisoners, would seem to show that not all the Italian army was animated by the same high spirit.

bardment<sup>34</sup> they could not establish a safe bridge-head. Fortune was moreover favorable to Italy. A slight rise in the Piave rendered the work of the Austrian commissary difficult and jealousy between the two generals, Conrad and Boroevitch, seems to have prevented the use of the reserves. After some days of bitter fighting, the Austrians, discouraged by Italian counter attacks, sullenly fell back across the river. It is possible that only the unwillingness of the Italians to risk a general counter offensive saved the invaders from disaster.<sup>35</sup>

The June defense of the Piave is to me the greatest military achievement of modern Italy and enough to shame those foreign writers who have made light of the Italian war and undertaken to discredit the war effort of the country and the valor of the troops.

During the summer the general situation changed for the better. The frantic efforts of the Central Empires to break the ring which was slowly strangling them began to tell on their strength. Ludendorf in France was retreating, with much of the fight gone out of his superb divisions. Bulgaria broke under circumstances about which there is still some mystery. Early in September Austria-Hungary proposed an armistice to President Wilson, which does not seem to have led to anything. An American regiment, under-trained, but superbly confident, the 332nd, was welcomed in Italy with regal honors for the promise it brought. There was talk of sending an entire American army to Venetia

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<sup>34</sup> Some 600,000 shells, 200,000 of which contained gas, were fired on a two divisional front in about four hours by the Austrians.

<sup>35</sup> The sinking of the dreadnought *Szent Istvan* by Luigi Rizzo in a motor boat was unquestionably the finest naval feat of the entire war.



and the governments went so far as to choose a base of supply.

Austria-Hungary was in its agony. Yet in spite of hunger and suffering, the old military empire still held together and resisted the hundred forces that were tearing at its existence. It might succumb, but was determined to avoid the humiliation of submitting to Italy.

Once more the Allies, fearing lest Austrian divisions be transferred to the western front to lighten the pressure on the Germans, demanded that Italy strike. In these favorable circumstances, General Diaz undertook the offensive that ended the war. *Morale* is a factor in war like any other and the Austrian *morale* had largely succumbed in the struggle against Italy. In this sense Italy may take credit for what was otherwise a too easy victory. The battle of Vittorio Veneto (the name of a small village to the north of Conegliano) was conceived by Italians and carried out by them with five allied divisions and one American regiment. In four days of late October fighting, the Italians split the Austrian center on their "Roman wedge" and poured through the gap, spreading out fan shape in pursuit. It is likely that the Austrians had already ordered a retreat. Their defeat was greater than the one they had inflicted on the Italians at Caporetto and their army was only saved from annihilation by the signing of the armistice on November 4. Whether Vittorio Veneto was a great battle only historians in possession of full knowledge can determine. Certainly it was a splendidly conceived and executed success which redounds to Italy's credit and definitely broke



into fragments Italy's one time master and constant enemy.

On November 4, at Villa Giusti near Padua, the Austrian delegates signed the armistice which, confirming the Italian claims, put an end to hostilities. Austria-Hungary had ceased to exist.

A few days later Germany too had signed her act of humiliation.

### ITALY IN THE WAR

Many foreigners, from interested motives, have attempted to reduce Italy's part in the war to a simple side show, and many Italians, from motives no less partisan, have endeavored to magnify it to the principal element in the entire struggle. Though nothing is really more fatuous than discussion of who won the war, a dispassionate word may not be amiss.

Fair-minded observers must admit certain facts; among others, these. Italy could have ruined France (though with tremendous risk to herself) by fighting beside the Central Empires in 1914. But this would have meant a curiously illogical interpretation of the Treaty of Triple Alliance, a dishonest rupture of the Prinetti-Barrère agreements, and a departure from a well-defined line of policy based on friendship with Great Britain. In these circumstances it is hardly fair to say that Italy "saved France" by her neutrality.

Italy entered the war on the side of the Allies only after driving a hard bargain. There was little generosity in the Treaty of London and much calculation; that it later proved unrealizable in some par-

ticulars and absurdly vague in others was the result of the incapacity and not of the intention of Baron Sonnino. The motives of her entry were such that they prevented her full strength from being available in the political scales of war and thus caused the conflict to drag on longer than it might have in other circumstances. But all this was clear and above board and the Allies had no reason for complaint. Italy expected her entry to be the decisive fact in ending the struggle; when this idea proved to be an error she might well have maintained her independence of action. Instead of which she very generously signed the pact not to make a separate peace. During the entire war her diplomatic conduct was irreproachable. Sixtus of Bourbon and those who employed him were not Italians. Italy, be it remembered, had no real enmity toward Germany.

Militarily, Italy gave all she had to give. She mobilized 5,200,000 soldiers. Her losses were, in proportion to her population, as high as those of Great Britain and infinitely higher than those of the British Empire. The financial drain upon her was proportionately the highest of those endured by the Allies. The privation undergone by her people was greater than that of any major Ally. Much of her strength was wasted by bad methods and natural obstacles and until the Russian collapse her importance in the general situation was not great. *But from the summer of 1917 until the appearance of large numbers of American troops in France her defense was absolutely vital to the Allied cause and had she gone under they could not have won the*

*war.*<sup>36</sup> This was her importance in the struggle. She bore her task without wavering.

Italy underwent the most spectacular defeat of the war at Caporetto and won the most striking victory, at Vittorio Veneto.

Economically the war was to Italy a terrible disaster. Morally, patriotically and, I believe, politically, it was by far the most fruitful event in her young existence. Yet owing to the narrow short-sighted minds of her statesmen, owing to the greed of the Allies and their jealousy, owing to the unfair treatment at the hands of Woodrow Wilson and owing to her own lack of development, the tangible results of the great struggle were not up to the expectations. The real fruits of victory were not immediately visible. Her statesmen allowed the country to be carried away by egoistic intoxication and the morning after was bitter.

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<sup>36</sup> Her collapse would have released some seventy Austro-Hungarian divisions—equal in number of men to nearly one hundred Prussian divisions—for service on the western front; to say nothing of the submarine bases which could have been established in the Mediterranean.

## CHAPTER IX

### BARON SONNINO STEERS THE SHIP OF STATE

The major Allied Powers fought the European war (as they said) for high ideals and settled it on the basis of hard facts. This was as the European statesmen had expected. "The irresistible force of facts comes into collision with the immovable body of principles; but the crash is soundless and by a delicate instinct Society looks the other way. The immortal principle is buried silently—not a drum is heard, not a funeral note." In the case of Italy alone the principle was wielded ruthlessly by Woodrow Wilson, and this absurd injustice was accomplished with much screaming and hullabaloo, while France and Britain looked on sanctimoniously and crossed themselves at the spectacle of Italian wickedness. It was all bluff, as intelligent Europeans were aware, but the inexperience of the common people, especially in the United States, made it possible for the world to see Italy in the light of a wicked ogre seeking to devour the noble and innocent Slav (the ally of Germany)—in manifest contrast with that liberty and justice and right of little peoples for which France and Britain and especially Russia had made war.

There is a legend of Russian innocence which will one day be dispelled. In Italy many persons were from the beginning aware that, however

willingly Germany may have caught at the chance of armed conflict, Russia had long planned for it and little Serbia, sure of Russia's backing, looked forward to it with confidence. In defense of Serbia can be averred the right of every nationality to realize its independence and unity; in defense of Russia the necessity of reaching the Mediterranean at Constantinople and the Adriatic (through Serbia) at Cattaro; in defense of Austria the campaign of assassination systematically carried on by the Bosnians with the complicity of Belgrade.

It is a lamentable fact that international politics cannot always be cleanly cut by the sword of personal morality. We shall only understand the Balkan pre-war situation if we view it as a conflict of ambitions and appetites and not as a clash of principles. Between these ambitions there was morally little to choose.

Austria-Hungary, reaching southward to Saloniki, was for the time being "saturated" with Slavs. But the Slovenes and Croatsians under her rule were clamorous for a trialistic Austria-Hungary-Slavia into which Serbia should enter. The Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (annexed in 1908) demanded union with Serbia in an independent Jugoslavia and the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy. The Serbs of Serbia, who had swallowed Macedonia, thanks to Roumanian aid, were also clamoring for Jugoslav unity and dreamed of reëstablishing the Balkan Empire of Stephen Dushan. Bulgaria was plotting revenge on Serbia and Greece for the loss of Macedonia, and Greece was contriving how she could best eat Southern Albania, whose frontiers,

established by the Powers in 1913, deprived her of a meal for which the table had, in Grecian eyes, already been laid. Montenegro's claws were itching for Albanian Skutari and her king, abandoned by Russia, was cudgeling his wits how he might oust the Serbian Karageorgevitch from the acknowledged captaincy of the Yugoslavs. France was bound to Russia and Serbia—Russian ambition and Serbian megalomania were alike built on French gold. Great Britain was bound to France; Germany to Austria. Only Italy had, so far as the Balkans were concerned, a position of comparative independence and Italy had her own aims—the domination of the Adriatic. It was here that the ambitions of Italy came into conflict with both Austrian and Slav.

### WAR FOR THE ADRIATIC

The Italian war remains incomprehensible unless we keep in mind that its aims and conduct were determined by the idea of securing the domination of this "most bitter sea." The situation of Italy in the Adriatic was unsatisfactory because the coast line gives strategic supremacy to the holder of the eastern shore. Austria occupied the stronger position and Italians had limited themselves to preventing Austria from strengthening her position farther. When they decided to enter the world war against Austria it was certainly not in order that Austria's place should be occupied by a Greater Serbia. The "solution of the Adriatic problem" meant to Baron Sonnino "the elimination



from that sea of every war fleet but Italy's."

This was doubtless an imperialist policy, as foreigners were not slow in pointing out at the time.<sup>1</sup> But it must be recognized that "the Italian government pursued exactly the same policy of expansion as did the other Allied governments, with more justification indeed and without the pretended altruism of others."<sup>2</sup>

The diplomatic means to secure Italy's war ends was the famous Treaty of London, of April 26, 1915. Viewed as an old line diplomatic document, it is an unquestioned masterpiece. It protected Italy's ambitions against every danger but one, which was precisely the danger occasioned by preponderating American influence at the Peace Conference.

In a world governed by national appetites Baron Sonnino needs no justification. The European tradition is all for "sacred egoism!" "Egoism," says a French writer, "becomes a duty and a virtue when applied to nations." According to his lights Baron Sonnino served his country well. Where he erred was not in lack of political idealism—a drug useful in stilling public opinion and harmless if administered in small doses—but psychologically in relying on the friendship of his allies, economically in undercalculating the length of the war, and politically in underestimating the importance of the United States. A conservative and man of impeccable honor, dogged, silent, he nevertheless considered it his duty to violate in the name of country

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<sup>1</sup> See Jacqu Bainville, *La Guerra et l'Italie*, and Sidney Low, *Italy in the War*.

<sup>2</sup> John Bass, *The Peace Tangle*.

## BARON SONNINO STEERS THE SHIP

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that principle of nationality whereby Italy had come into being. What the pious statesmen of other nations have never pardoned him was that he refused to pay verbal homage to principles he did not intend to serve. He refused to collaborate militarily with a people (the Serbs) whose political ambitions he intended to frustrate. He insisted on Italy being treated by the other Powers as an ally and an equal and this too was hard to condone. But upon Lloyd George his strong character gained an undoubted ascendancy.

"In the beautiful dumb days the strong rent the weak in sacred simplicity. Now . . . the weak must listen to speeches that they are being eaten for their own good."<sup>3</sup> Hypocrisy at least is not an Italian vice. . . .

Domination of the Adriatic was then the unblushing aim, war was the means, Austria-Hungary the chief military adversary, the Slavs the chief political adversary, Baron Sonnino the guiding genius, of Italy's policy during five years. The Baron never reveals anything, and until the publication of his posthumous memoirs, much will remain dark. But something can already be made apparent by a rigid confrontation of the Treaty of London of April, 1915, with succeeding events.

The first step was taken in October, 1914, when the Italian government consented to the occupation of Southern Albania by Greek troops in view of the "increasing anarchy."<sup>4</sup> Italy was to have the same right in the region of Valona, which it would appear she had already attempted to obtain by agree-

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<sup>3</sup> Israel Zangwill, *Italian Fantasies*.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Documents Secrets Publiés par les Bolcheviks*, No. 34.

ment with Austria in 1913.<sup>5</sup> Naturally the Albanian inhabitants were not consulted and whatever anarchy existed had been artfully provoked by Greek bands. Italian marines landed at Valona on Christmas Day, 1914. Sazonoff, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, congratulated Italy on this move, affirming with manifest satisfaction that "Albania no longer exists as a separate state."<sup>6</sup> Only natural therefore that we find Article VI of the Treaty of London confirming Italy in the possession of this port, the reputed key to the Adriatic.

The Treaty did more: it left the Yugoslavs divided into four or five distinct states. Serbia would be allowed to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, lower Dalmatia and Northern Albania, Montenegro would take Skutari, Italy would herself take Central Dalmatia with nearly all the covering islands, Croatia would become a separate state with the Italo-Hungarian port of Fiume; while Slovenia, which is not mentioned, (and perhaps Croatia as well, at a later date) would presumably remain under a greatly reduced Austria, where its small minority of Slavs would be overborne and perhaps denationalized. (The idea of a reduced Austria-Hungary as a cushion state was a fixed idea with Sonnino.) The Italians regarded the Yugoslavs as an inferior people of specific "Balkanic" mentality; the territorial settlement under the Treaty would, if carried out, have paralyzed their movements for some decades.

The Italian people, however, needed "education" if they were to carry on a war against the Yugo-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 23.

<sup>6</sup> W. K. Wallace, *Greater Italy*, p. 228.

slavs, a people of whom most of them had never heard. Sonnino cared little for the redemption of the few thousand Dalmatian Italians, as he showed by his ready abandonment of the truly Italian city of Fiume. Roman and Venetian civilization had however been uppermost in Dalmatia and the country had belonged to Venice longer than Alsace to France. So Sonnino and the Nationalists mobilized the Italian refugees from Dalmatia (most of them with Slav names) and gave them free rein in the press, where dissenting opinions were suppressed: in a short time Italian public opinion was oriented definitely against the "hated Croats."

The resulting hostility of the Austrian Slavs was calmly accepted by Sonnino even though it made the Italian war a terrible affair, for these Slavs formed sixty per cent. of the Austro-Hungarian forces and they considered Italy their bitterest enemy: better united under Austria than divided between Serbs, Austrians, and Italians! Friendship with, and an active propaganda among the Austrian Slavs might have dismembered the Hapsburg monarchy a year or two earlier than actually happened. But Sonnino, impenitently hostile to these Slavs, scorned to come to terms with them and during the war, relations between Italy and Serbia were none of the warmest.

The value of Dalmatia for Italian control of the Adriatic appears in this light irrelevant to the discussion. For Sonnino did not aim exclusively at securing naval dominion of a stretch of water, for which the possession of a few strategic points would doubtless suffice. He aimed, if my thesis be cor-

rect, at far reaching political advantages, at paralyzing for an indefinite time the political activity of the Serbs, at constructing a permanent barrier against the Pan-Slavic tide, at combating the westward expansion of the Slavs by an eastward Italian expansion into the Balkans. Italy was to become the sentinel of Western Europe's conquering intelligence in the coming struggle against Eastern Europe's unlimited procreative power. Dalmatia might, as Generals Diaz and Cadorna admitted, be almost useless so long as mere naval supremacy of the Adriatic was at stake. But in the impending struggle with Slavdom it would be a priceless possession—cheap at any price. Sonnino's stubborn refusal to give up his claim to it was from this point of view eminently reasonable.

Where the old conservative went astray was in failing to realize the strength of historic currents and immaterial ideas. Yugoslav unity would seem to have been a fatality; either Austria won and the Croats and Slovenes absorbed the Serbs, or Serbia won and stretched her territories to the Adriatic and the River Drava. When once the idea of nationality has taken firm hold on a divided people nothing can eradicate it and all events lead to the same end. Sonnino should have realized this while it was yet time and chosen other weapons. But this he could not or would not realize.

## GREEKS AND BULGARS

“VII. . . . Should Italy obtain the Trentino and Istria in accordance with Article IV, together with Dalmatia and the Adriatic Islands within the limit



specified in Article V, and the Bay of Valona (Article VI) and if the central portion of Albania is reserved for the establishment of a small, autonomous, neutralized state, Italy shall not oppose the division of Northern and Southern Albania between Montenegro, Serbia and Greece should France, Great Britain and Russia so desire. . . . Italy agrees moreover to leave sufficient territory in any event to the east of Albania, to insure the existence of a frontier line between Greece and Serbia to the west of Lake Ochrida."

So runs the Treaty of London; in this clause there lies the explanation of certain phases of the world war which have been rather neglected. What is the meaning of Russia's satisfaction that "Albania no longer exists as a separate state"? What had Albania done to offend? Why should France, Great Britain and Russia desire to partition the little country between Montenegro, Serbia and Greece? Simply because the Powers, in their unselfish struggle for the rights of little nations, were determined to buy mercenaries wherever they could find them and pay them, not out of their own holdings, but with the property of an inoffensive third party.

If Bulgaria would only aid the Allies, Turkey might be isolated and destroyed, the Straits might be opened and Russia could receive munitions from the Occident, while Russian troops might be brought to France. But only one song would sound siren-sweet in the ears of Bulgaria; that she be given Macedonia, of which she had been despoiled at the close of the second Balkan war. If Serbia ceded Macedonia with Monastir to Bul-



garia and the district of Doiran to Greece, and if Greece ceded Kavalla to Bulgaria, and since Greece and Serbia *must* have a common frontier, it is clear that they could only have had this compensation and this frontier "to the west of the Lake of Ochrida," in territory which the Powers had in 1913 recognized to be inhabited by Albanians.<sup>7</sup>

Bulgaria entered the war indeed, but on the side of Germany! Serbia wished to cede nothing, Greece was unwilling, England's diplomatic representative at Sofia was, if rumor be credited, a confirmed Serbophile. Greece entered the war unwillingly and late. Greek bands had in the meantime overrun Southern Albania and this district had even sent representatives to the Greek chamber! It was to enforce the allied policy of "no fight, no eat" that Italian troops early in 1917 set out from Valona and drove the Greeks from the territories where their occupation had been one long tale of terror and arson.

## A LITTLE DIPLOMATIC POKER

Italian military occupation of Southern Albania as a temporary measure is further explained by the need for securing overland communications with the Balkan front, upon which Italian troops had made their appearance in August, 1916. But when (June 3, 1917) General Ferrero at Argyrokastro proclaimed the independence of Albania under Italian protection, nearly every one was startled and there was almost a Cabinet crisis in Italy itself. A French colonel had in the previous December pro-

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<sup>7</sup> *Les Documents Secrets publiés par les Bolcheviks*, Nos. 24 and 34.

claimed the independent Republic of Korcha under the historic red and black banner of Scanderbeg with Essad Pasha, an incorrigibly corrupt tyrant, as first President. None the less Sonnino was accused of bad faith. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Italy was merely looking after Italy and answering insidious Allied maneuvers by an open act of independence. For while on one side this declaration

(a) prepared the Albanians for the coming formation of that "small, autonomous and neutralized Albania" foreseen by the Treaty of London, and might be expected to win their sympathy; and

(b) made it clear that Greece could expect no Albanian territory without entering the war beside the Allies; on the other side it

(c) showed Serbia that despite any arrangements she might make, Italy considered her possible claim to Northern Albania to be invalid for the reason that she had not ceded Macedonia to Bulgaria;

(d) showed France and Great Britain that without the adherence of Russia, whose revolutionary leaders were receding from the imperialist attitude, their "possible desire" to partition Albania could not be legally binding,<sup>8</sup> and, most important

(e) checkmated whatever desire the Allied Powers may have had to accept the Austrian Emperor's proposals for a separate peace which would spare the Dual Monarchy, and yet at the same time offered to Serbia "compensation" in Albania—the rectification of the frontiers of Italy, Serbia and

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<sup>8</sup> Establishing thereby a precedent later to be followed against Italy in the case of Smyrna.

Roumania being meanwhile considered “*questions de détail.*”

Honest Ribot had insisted that the proposals of Emperor Karl be communicated to Italy at St. Jean de Maurienne (April 19, 1917) and there can be no doubt but that Sonnino's answering proclamation of Albanian independence was intended to nip such proposals in the bud.

At the same conference an agreement was reached concerning the division of Asiatic Turkey, which resulted in August in the allotting of Smyrna to Italy in addition to “that part which borders on the province of Adalia,” where Italy's claim had been established by the Treaty of London.

The Russian revolution and the entry of the United States were already worrying the Entente leaders, who considered it increasingly necessary to stand shoulder to shoulder and resist any attempt to inject American idealism into the body politic of Europe. Wilson proceeded with a cold directness which scandalized these venerable Machiavellis, for whom, as for Tennyson,

The form, the form alone is eloquent.

### THE YUGOSLAVS AND THE PACT OF CORFU

History hardly records the realization in so short a time of a dream so bold as that of the Yugoslav leaders, and it is rare that a little people succeeds so perfectly in achieving its ends. There were difficulties within as well as without, for the inhabitants of Slovenia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, though of a single

race, had never been completely united, and had acquired what might have seemed insuperable divergencies of religion and social tradition. But the Serbs entered the war none the less confident of annexing a good number of these territories and aided by a few of the Yugoslav leaders of Austria, and set about convincing the Allies of their right to unified national existence. As early as November, 1914, the Serbian *Skuptchina*, with admirable courage, proclaimed the program of union. In May, 1915, the Yugoslav Committee in London issued a manifesto to the Entente, claiming the union of all the branches of the South Slavs and warning the world against the danger of leaving so many of the Slavs under Austro-Hungarian rule or of transferring them to another alien rule. And in July, 1917, at a moment when despite American entry the future of Serbia looked amazingly dark, the famous Pact of Corfu was signed under French patronage and the existence of the new State proclaimed. Such courageous tenacity could not but have its effect and it is not strange that men so animated should have been able to persuade the world of the justice of their cause.

But in Dalmatia—the home of the most cultured of the Yugoslavs—these claims clashed with those of Sonnino. The Yugoslav leaders were forced to leave Rome, where they had at first established their headquarters, and their claims were everywhere combated by the Italians. Italian apprehensions were aroused—be it said—not against 12,000-000 Yugoslavs but against all Slavdom.

Against Italian hostility, with which, despite their

unquestioned valor, the Yugoslavs were not or ever could be, unaided, in a condition to cope, they mobilized an active and subtle propaganda. They succeeded so well that, aided by French and a certain section of British public opinion, they became the spoiled darlings of the Peace Conference. Propaganda was a weapon Sonnino did not understand or despise. His defense was to keep the Italians largely in the dark as to Yugoslav aims and activities!! The surprise and rage of the people upon finding themselves successfully opposed by these all but unknown Slavs were only the more bitter.

### AMERICAN ENTRY INTO THE WAR

It is no doubt a remarkable coincidence that the most unscrupulous pacts of Allied statesmen all date from 1917—from a moment, that is, when the armed intervention of the United States on their side was either a promise or an accomplished fact. There was indeed something sinister and comic in the manner French and Russian statesmen (Jan.-March, 1917) hastened to grant each other “full liberty” to fix their respective frontiers with Germany<sup>9</sup> and in the final design (August, 1917)<sup>10</sup> for securing liberty and justice in Turkey by splitting up the Turks. It was not considered necessary to communicate these plans to the United States. But in the meantime Britain and France had celebrated America’s intervention with proper solemnity and started to turn the moral fortifications of the American President (impregnable to frontal at-

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<sup>9</sup> *Bolshevik Documents*, No. 41.

<sup>10</sup> See Isaac Don Levine in the *Chicago Daily News*, February 7, 1920.



tack) by that skillful offensive of flattery, cunning and injured innocence which later enabled them to defeat humanity's hopes at the Peace Conference.

Baron Sonnino was above such tactics. As a statesman he looked east, not west; his understanding of the political importance and potential power of the United States was less than that of the humblest emigrant. He had never taken the slightest step to sway or captivate American public opinion while the United States was neutral. American correspondents on the Italian front had not been welcomed. For Sonnino was wiser than his critics. He had thrown Italy into the war in order to secure certain tangible advantages guaranteed by the Pact of London. No amount of propaganda could ever have made these terms acceptable to the American people who, if asked to choose between Italian "security" and Yugoslav "national union," would unhesitatingly have decided for the latter. The less said of Italian war aims in America, the better. The Roman press under his inspiration welcomed American entry coldly, almost with hostility.<sup>11</sup>

The position of the Italian Ambassador at Washington, Count Vincenzo Macchi di Cellere, was, under these circumstances, extremely difficult. His work could be only negative. A man cannot be blamed for failing to do the impossible and to win over Woodrow Wilson to the Italian viewpoint as exemplified in the Treaty of London, was impossible! The Count faithfully informed Sonnino

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<sup>11</sup> The only ceremony, in honor of the American Ambassador at the time, was a luncheon organized and paid for by three American newspaper correspondents.



(April 17, 1917) that Wilson intended to dominate the Peace Conference and make peace according to his principles. Macchi di Cellere gained the affection and personal esteem of the President. More than this no man could have done.

From the moment of American entry three ways were open to Sonnino: (1) he might have endeavored to form a close alliance between the principal Allies to resist the Wilson claims; (2) he might have adopted the left-handed tactics of France and Great Britain and sought to cloak his real intentions; (3) he might have torn up the Treaty of London and sought a direct understanding with the Yugoslavs, or at least have shown that he was prepared to forego his advantages in view of a modified situation. The Russian defection left the Allies too greatly in need of American aid for them to resist the claims of the President. Sonnino chose to follow neither of the two ways remaining open to him, merely warning the Ambassador at Washington of the danger of "bothering the President's mind with the conditions established by the Pact of London."<sup>12</sup>

Partly in consequence of this strange conduct, no appreciable body of American troops ever fought in Italy and American public opinion followed the Slav exaggerations in considering the Italian policy as imperialistic. When a distinction was finally drawn between the aims of the Sonnino group and those of the Italian people, it was naïvely supposed in America that the aims of the people would prevail!

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<sup>12</sup> Justus, V. *Macchi di Cellere all' Ambasciata di Washington*, p. 66, Bemporad, Florence.

The Italian defeat at Caporetto shook Sonnino's position but it did not dislodge him from it. The newspapers which he inspired protested bitterly against the ninth of the Fourteen Points (January 18, 1918) which favored "the readjustment of the frontiers of Italy along clearly recognizable lines of nationality." Italy had a solemn Treaty signed by her Allies. . . .

But the Italian people, who were sincerely fighting for Belgium, democracy and their unredeemed brothers, responded almost as one man to the President's appeal. Democratic leaders long silent put themselves at the head of a movement which aimed at an understanding between Italy and the Slavs, carried it through to the famous Pact of Rome, won over Premier Orlando and many others and, aided by Americans in Italy, led President Wilson to believe that he alone had the hearts of Italians. This impression, strengthened during the presidential visit of December, 1918, led to his inexcusable conduct at the Peace Conference, founded on "an estimate of Italian public opinion which astonished and pained the Italian Premier, who having contributed to form it, deemed himself a more competent judge of its trend."<sup>13</sup>

The effects of this strange misapprehension may last a long time. At Taormina in Sicily, in January, 1921, an Italian peasant, annoyed at an American tourist, loosed upon him an insuperable flow of invective. The mildest of the names called was "bastard son of a sow," the strongest unprintable. After five minutes the peasant felt his strength

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<sup>13</sup> Dillon, *The Peace Conference*, p. 250.

failing and launched his last bolt. "You—you son of Wilson!" he hissed.

In the mind of humble and ignorant Italians the "Presbyterian President" is remembered only as the tyrant who robbed Italy of her victory.

### THE PACT OF ROME

To understand the Italian war it is necessary to realize that for more than two years the Italian armies were hurled against a mass of normally unenthusiastic soldiers galvanized by knowledge of what an Italian victory might have in store for them. Italian war aims proved to be the best possible propaganda to bind together the centrifugally tending Slav peoples, and the Croat Field Marshal Boroevitch von Bojna became inevitably a national hero.

Official Italy was slow to believe in the fighting efficacy of American intervention. The day preceding the landing of the first American troops in France an Italian Minister of Marine, Admiral Triangi, expressed the opinion that German submarines would prevent a large American force from ever fighting on French soil. This frankness cost the admiral his position, but his was the real opinion of educated Italians.

So long as the Italians were winning, American aid and opinion did not seem very important. With the Austrians on the River Piave and within gun shot of Venice, Dalmatia seemed very far away. The new commander in chief General Diaz, was no friend of Italian expansion beyond the Adriatic. The terms of the Treaty of London became public,

thanks to the Bolsheviks in February, 1918. That part of public opinion traditionally hostile to Sonnino or impressed by American entry thought it time to change tactics. *Austria delenda!* was a cry which could unite Italians and Slavs in a common crusade. Their differences could be settled later. The Czechoslovaks had already acquired the sympathy of the Allied and Associate Powers and were in almost open revolt against Germans and Majars. The Yugoslavs, cautious at first, had burned their bridges with the Pact of Corfu. The Poles and Ruthenes and Roumanians only needed encouragement. Italian public opinion, a small part of which had long been actively opposing Sonnino, became favorable to an understanding with the Slavs and Premier Orlando—that ever faithful mirror of popular sentiment—became favorable too. Sonnino, hostile though he was to the entire proceeding, could not oppose it openly and conceded the passports for the Slav delegates to enter Italy.

“The Pact of Rome was born of an alliance between the idealism of a few, the political conviction of quite a number, the machiavellian duplicity of many and the passivity of most.”<sup>14</sup> The organizers met the representatives of the rebellious oppressed peoples of Austria-Hungary at Rome in April, 1918, and on the Capitoline solemnly signed the Pact of Rome—which, with the Wilsonian pronouncement that it provoked, constituted the death sentence of the Dual Monarchy by demanding the “total liberation” of the “oppressed peoples.”

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<sup>14</sup> Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Vittorio Veneto*.

As between Italy and the Yugoslavs the text ran:

“The representatives of the two peoples recognize that the unity and independence of the Yugoslav nation are a vital interest of Italy, as the rounding out of Italian national unity is a vital interest of the Yugoslav nation.” But no territorial settlement was attempted and technically the Treaty of London was not compromised. Most people however, (including Premier Orlando) felt that something had been really changed in the relations between Italy and the Slavs.

The signing of the Pact of Rome brought to the front of the public stage Leonidas Bissolati, a reformist socialist and political figure of a type rare in Italy. Bissolati had once edited the *Avanti!*, but had enlisted at the beginning of the war as a sergeant of Alpine troops and after being wounded, entered the Boselli Cabinet of June, 1916 and remained in the post-Caporetto Cabinet of Orlando. Little by little he became the impersonator of idealist Italy and the strongest opponent of the Pact of London. The political duel between him and Sonnino filled the rest of 1918. Bissolati, supported by the better part of the press, relied on the United States and Wilson. Sonnino, craftily immobile, remained strongly entrenched behind the diplomatic secret and his own autocracy in the old Palace of the Consulta.

Not all the Yugoslav and Italian signers were entirely sincere. The Croatian leader Ante Trumbitch had hardly signed the Pact when he sent out through the Yugoslav Committees a circular to the effect that propaganda against Italian aspirations



was to continue unabated.<sup>15</sup> In judging this act we must remember that the Yugoslavs—actively fighting against the Allied cause—could not possibly achieve their unity without the aid of Italian arms in striking down Austria. This is a point that seems to have slipped the mind of many Americans.

The Austrian reverse on the Piave (June, 1918) gave Sonnino<sup>16</sup> the prestige to carry through his opposition to the formation and employment of a Yugoslav legion raised among the prisoners in Italy. Bissolati fought as best he could and seemed in September to have gained the victory. In his words, "Sonnino . . . fought even to the point of offering to resign." Bissolati did prevail to the extent that the Italian Government sent out a communication to the Allies approving the movement of the Yugoslavs for unity and independence as conforming to the aims for which the Entente was fighting.<sup>17</sup> And Orlando solemnly remarked to Bissolati "We have won."<sup>18</sup>

Bissolati did not know that Sonnino, with duplicity similar to that of Trumbitch, accompanied this communication with a letter to all the Italian ambassadors qualifying the solemn declaration as an "insignificant expedient for war propaganda without value."<sup>19</sup>

The facile victory of Vittorio Veneto (October,

<sup>15</sup> Luigi Lodi, *Il Giornale d'Italia*, January 28, 1920.

<sup>16</sup> Aided by the stubborn megalomania of the Serbs, who insisted that all the Yugoslav volunteers swear allegiance to King Peter!

<sup>17</sup> Proposed by Balfour, in June, 1918.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to Luigi Campolunghi, published in the *Rome Giornale del Popolo*, January 28, 1921.

<sup>19</sup> See interesting comment by Guglielmo Emanuel, *Il Corriere della Cera*, January 8, 1921.



1918) affected the Italian people like alcohol. The Austro-Hungarian army had crumbled. Wilsonian propaganda had done as much as Italian shells, but a jingo press and an excited public naturally forgot all but the shells. Italy alone and unaided had, after thrice saving the Allies, now won the war! Yugoslav and Czechoslovak megalomania, the presumption of the Serbs and the veiled hostility of the Allies to Italian aspirations, aided the Italian Jingoos. The man of the Treaty of London had an easy victory over the man of the now despised Pact of Rome. Bissolati resigned from the Cabinet when it was decided to claim the lands awarded Italy by the Treaty and a few days later was hissed at the *Teatro della Scala* in Milan while trying in a mournful speech to call his compatriots back to Mazzini and good sense.

#### SONNINO HANGS ON TO THE LAST

Sydney Sonnino triumphed over his liberal minded adversaries by sheer force of determination. Not that his personal following was large. Rather that his force of will and uncompromising conviction which gained him the respect and support of the Allies, enabled him to persuade the country that his desires and ambitions were those of Italy—even when events had occurred which might well have counseled some modification. Nothing is more significant than the way successive cabinets during the war rode rough shod over the Chamber of Deputies unless it be the manner in which Sonnino assumed private ownership of the foreign affairs. For the first three years of war there was, men said,

no general cabinet discussion of foreign policy.

Sonnino, the taciturn, used the press skillfully and appealed to each group of supporters according to its needs. The desire to possess Dalmatia in order to curb forever Yugoslav expansion westward could not be popular—it contrasted with the generous temper of the Italian people. So Sonnino was silent as to his real design and talked of other things, military necessity and naval pride. The claim of Italian Irredentism before the war had never extended beyond the Trentino, Trieste and Istria. At the right moment, however, a number of unredeemed Italian Dalmatians came forward to tell the story of long and bitter struggle against Slav invasion. The truth was that the Italian minority in the Dalmatian towns, whose culture formerly enabled them to exercise dominion in local government, had gradually been dispossessed by the slowly awakening Slavs, encouraged by Austria. Facts are facts and Italy had become united on the basis of majority rule. But the unredeemed spokesmen answered that all the Slav civilization is Italian and the land strewn with Roman and Venetian monuments. Should the representatives of the race which thrice has cast the mold of occidental civilization be sacrificed to Scythian barbarians?

Italian opinion had no fault to find with this reasoning.

How the wizard of the *Consulta* must have smiled at all this futile discussion of abstract principles—the pastime of incurable doctrinaires—while he, the realist, had, carefully locked up somewhere, a precious parchment, duly signed, which gave him what

he desired! Does a nation ever need justification? Sonnino ignored Serbia when much would have been freely granted by the Serbs. He never opened his mind to Wilson even when the latter already threw a giant shadow over the coming Peace Conference. He doubtless prevented the Italian navy from lifting a finger in aid of the Slav mutineers in the Austrian fleet at Cattaro and imprisoned their messenger. Consistent to the last, he fought to preserve Austria-Hungary even after Vittorio Veneto, when the Dual Monarchy was already in fragments, trusting perhaps to economic interests for bringing the fragments together again. It was Sonnino who at the Conference supported the French in the decision against German annexation of Austria, despite the opposition of the British and American delegations to this measure.

The Treaty of London assigned Fiume to Croatia. But the majority of Fiumians—merchants whose patriotism is largely confined to their city and their pocketbooks—are Italian in speech and tradition and would rather be dead than Slav. Early in the war they asked to be “redeemed”; on October 18, 1918, Signor Ossoinach declared in the Hungarian Parliament that Fiume, an ancient free city, intended to decide its own fate according to the Wilsonian principle of self-determination. Twelve days later the Fiumian “National Council” declared Fiume annexed to Italy.

Nevertheless Sonnino, drawing with the Allies the zone of Italian occupation under the armistice agreement, succeeded in having the line fixed to correspond with that of the Treaty of London and

excluded Fiume. He did not desire the suffocation but the eternal disunity of the Southern Slavs. Possession of Fiume would tend to draw Croatia away from Serbia towards Austria. In a famous council of war at Rome (December 26, 1918), Sonnino, against the advice of Bissolati and General Diaz, declared it necessary to give up the claim to Fiume. And the ductile Orlando murmured. "*Allora, rinunziamo a Fiume.*"

Poor Sonnino! Not even the refusal of Lloyd George to grant his claim to Smyrna<sup>20</sup> appears to have warned him, although he spoke somewhat tartly of "another scrap of paper." At the Conference he made no move to save himself until it was too late. For many months nothing was even said of Fiume.

To be sure he had never accepted the Fourteen Points. On October 31, 1918, the Allied statesmen met at Paris to discuss the acceptance of the German offer of armistice on the basis of the Wilson principles. Great Britain immediately came out against the freedom of the seas and France demanded broad interpretation of the reparation clause. Sonnino for Italy declared that he certainly did not accept Point 9. The following day in the presence of American representatives, he repeated the protest. On both occasions he was assured that only Germany was being considered in view of the Fourteen Points. At a later date adherence to these points was unjustly charged against him.

The Allies were of course bound by the Pact of

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<sup>20</sup> On the pretext that Russia had not ratified the agreement of *St. Jean de Maurienne*.

London and continued to express their willingness to abide by it. What Sonnino failed to realize was the overwhelming power wielded by Woodrow Wilson. The Italian Minister, standing pat on the Treaty without Fiume and supported by his allies would still have had small chance of carrying his contention. But with his allies lukewarm and the Treaty broken by the claim for Fiume, his position was hopeless. To be sure he had not wanted Fiume, but during the Conference "the Italian Irredentists soon carried the campaign beyond the control of the Italian government."<sup>21</sup> Sonnino had rubbed the magic lamp of Dalmatia and the genie of popular passion which he conjured up ended by overcoming him at Fiume. Poetic justice was satisfied.

Just why the Baron failed to recognize how firmly Wilson held both Italy and Yugoslavia "in the hollow of his hand"<sup>22</sup> or precisely how he expected, even without Fiume, to overcome American opposition to the Treaty of London, are unsolved problems. The Italians seem to have entered the Conference in placid beatitude. Had not Sonnino the Allies' signed bond? Had not Fiume, in virtue of self-determination already declared itself annexed to Italy?

### THE PEACE CONFERENCE

The Peace Conference established the world supremacy of the Anglo-Saxons, with France in tow, and Italy did not enter into the scheme for world domination imagined by the dictators. On this ac-

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<sup>21</sup> John Bass, *The Peace Tangle*.

<sup>22</sup> Dillon, *The Peace Conference*.



count the dice were loaded against her, and save where her ambitions offered an opportunity for splitting off a few hundred thousand Germans of the Tyrol, they were frustrated. The Italian delegates were isolated, without a friend. The Wilson principles were applied rigorously against her and in favor of the Jugoslavs, her enemies.

Perhaps the greatest unfairness was the admission of Yugoslav delegates to the Conference. These Jugoslavs had even less diplomatic status than the Albanians, who were for a long time refused admittance. Italy, quite correctly, recognized only Serbia. During the war the Croats, Slovenes and Dalmates—traditionally faithful to the Emperor—had fought to the last ditch against the Allies. Their leaders had straddled the fence, preaching Yugoslav unity in Western Europe and fidelity to the Hapsburgs at home. In favor of the Slavs it must be said that certain of them performed valuable service for the Allies and a number fought against the Austrians in the Balkans. In Italy their services, as we have seen, were sparingly accepted. But Italy had, as a major factor in the Allied victory, the right to insist on the exclusion of a part of her enemies from the Conference, at least until such time as the Powers had definitely confirmed the annexation of the Slav lands to Serbia. Without Italian intervention the Allies would never have won the war and Yugoslav unity would have remained a pious dream.

The Allied lack of consideration for Italy found expression in President Wilson, who, however we may judge his acts from the point of view of the



United States or of humanity, really served only those Europeans who desired Italian ambitions to be curbed. In view of his principles Wilson considered himself justified in favoring the Austrian Slavs at the expense of Italy, and so be it. But his famous message concerning Fiume (provoked by the Italian threat of not signing the Peace Treaty with Germany) was at the same time an inconsistency, an insult and a mistake.

An inconsistency, because it attempted to enforce on Italy rigid respect for certain principles that could have been justified only by "whole-hearted and rigid application of the Wilson tenets to all nations without exception."

An insult, because it implied a different attitude toward Italy than toward the other Allied States and thus justified the remark of the poet, Sem Benelli, that "President Wilson evidently considers our country on the plane of an African colony dominated by the will of a few ambitious men."

A mistake, because the President's opposition was pivoted not on Dalmatia and the Treaty of London, but on Fiume. The Italian claim to Dalmatia (outside of Zara) was one of political and military convenience—the "right" of the strongest Adriatic Power. But to Fiume she had the moral right expressed in the will of the inhabitants both of Italy and of that free city. Behind the Italian claim for Fiume there lay, to be sure, the cupidity of the Triestine shipowners, anxious for their trade, as behind that of the Yugoslavs there lay all the cupidity of shipowners of other countries. But how little attention the Italian government paid to

these economic appetites appears from Sonnino's obstinate renunciation of Fiume. President Wilson might have opposed the Treaty of London as much as he liked and still had a large following in Italy. To deny Fiume was to betray his own principle—to *demand* what might only have been *requested* for the sake of international peace and in case similar sacrifices had been asked of other countries. Such a demand united the Italians against him. Is Wilson the Almighty God? people asked. Incidentally, the President broke his agreement to keep the negotiations secret.

At the last moment Sonnino seems to have awakened from his error and offered to reduce his Dalmatian claims.<sup>23</sup> He opposed Orlando's plan to leave Paris. But the susceptible Premier could not overcome the temptation to appeal so dramatically to his people. The Italians rose as one man to give him the triumph he craved. Wilson was reviled; casual Americans, insulted. And to a great extent Italian indignation was justified.

Orlando's triumph was short. The Conference at Paris proceeded as though Italy did not exist. Greek troops were allowed to land at Smyrna and economic measures detrimental to Italy were taken. Orlando and Sonnino returned to Paris secretly just in time to save something out of the wreck. But although Sonnino's action in despatching troops to Asia Minor temporarily saved the Adalia claim, his Dalmatian program was shipwrecked—never to be salvaged. A few weeks later the Orlando Ministry fell and Sonnino left the post he had held for

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<sup>23</sup> This offer never appeared in the Italian Press!

nearly five years. For eighteen months the Adriatic question remained open, costing great suffering and unreckoned expense. It is sad to realize that the settlement reached in November, 1920, could have been had at the hands of Woodrow Wilson in April, 1919, with, in addition, large colonial and economic compensation. But perhaps it was worth something to Italian pride not to have submitted to the dictator.

“Italy undoubtedly gained a good deal by the war. But she signed the peace treaty convinced that she had succeeded in neither purpose and that her allies were answerable for her failure.”<sup>24</sup>

What the Italian nationalists have never forgiven Wilson and the Allies was less the loss of Fiume and Dalmatia than the destruction of the spirit of triumphant victory—a precious possession to a people but slowly awakening to national consciousness.

### CONCLUSIONS

To attempt to pass judgment on Baron Sonnino's statesmanship would be in any case premature and at best merely a subjective appreciation. But avoiding controversial points we may still establish certain facts to aid in understanding the man and his work.

1. Baron Sydney Sonnino served the Italian state with fidelity, nobility and tenacity of purpose rare among modern statesmen. His policy, however morally questionable, was fully justified by the political habits of our time.

2. This policy was strictly Italian and he may be

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<sup>24</sup> Dillon, *The Peace Conference*.

said to have inaugurated the era of Italian diplomatic independence.

3. This policy aimed at the domination of the Adriatic and the conservation of Italy's liberty of action, at the humbling of Germany, the weakening but not the destruction of Austria-Hungary, permanent hostility to the Yugoslavs, and the acquiring of a field in the Near East for Italian commercial expansion and emigration.

4. With the Russian revolution this policy was doomed to defeat because it contrasted with the desires of the American President—the dominant figure at the Peace Conference.

5. Sonnino through lack of imagination or sheer obstinacy failed to compromise when compromise was possible, and so came to grief at the Conference. Lack of Allied support, the nationalist and Irredentist demands for Fiume, division in the Italian Delegation—these were small factors. The real cause of Italy's diplomatic defeat at Paris and her undeserved humiliation, was the stubborn temperament of the silent Minister of Foreign Affairs.

## CHAPTER X

### FIUME O MORTE: A MEDIÆVAL MEDLEY

The Lacedemonian Phebidas had in full peace seized upon the citadel of the Thebans. Agesilas was asked concerning the justice of their act. "Only ascertain if it is useful," the king said, "for when an act is useful to one's country, it is a fine thing to do."<sup>25</sup>

The fantastic adventure which brought world fame to a small town on the eastern shore of an arm of the Upper Adriatic jerks us roughly out of the antebellum possible into an atmosphere of anarchic medievalism which enveloped Italy and much of the rest of Europe after the Peace Conference failed to recapture peace.

The Fiume raid followed the clash of two political conceptions, the point at issue was substantially a legal one. The Allies have never remembered nor Italians forgot that Fiume Town was for centuries an independent municipality, a little "nation," fortuitously in the last years, subject to Hungary it is true, but stubbornly holding high its banner as *corpus separatum*; quite as jealous of its "national rights" as Bohemia or Ireland. This fact, with the Italian speech of the inhabitants, endeared the city instinctively to Italians, but naturally escaped the less anciently trained political perceptions of Woodrow Wilson and the foreign Prime

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<sup>1</sup> Feustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*.

Ministers, who stubbornly refused to see in the *corpus separatum* of Fiume anything but a convenient port for East Central Europe. But without this background of crude local color, the medieval *gesta* of Fiume could not have been imagined.

The tendency to consider the Fiume affair as a picturesque but totally reprehensible manifestation of Italian imperialism merely betrays foreign ignorance of Italian affairs and, more particularly, of Italian national psychology. Modern imperialism is, in its subsoil, greedy and calculating. The Fiume drama was in every respect disastrous for the Italian Government, costing many million dollars for each of the twenty months that it lasted, paralyzing all the more important political initiatives, fostering all forms of internal disruption, a nail in the foot of a nation whose greatest need was to struggle out of the war atmosphere into the balmy regions of peace. The Fiume drama was all this—yet it received in its early stages the popular support of the Italian people. This was not calculation: not in a century could possession of Fiume financially or politically recompense Italy for the losses sustained in preventing the Allies from handing it over to Croatia. Half the sum wasted by Yugoslavia in the support of armies during the controversy might have connected any one of her superb Dalmatian ports with the railroad system of the hinterland. Excepting for the unimportant commercial desire of Trieste shipowners, the Italians' interest in Fiume was sheer poetry.

The break between Wilson and Orlando and the various subsequent diplomatic attempts to resolve



the problem, culminating in the Treaty of Rapallo, have been frequently detailed. Prime Minister Orlando—with characteristic mental confusion—brandished the Treaty of London over Slav and German, but it broke it for self-determination in favor of the *corpus separatum* of Fiume. Wilson as stubbornly demanded self-determination for Istrian Slovenes and Dalmatian Croates (though not for Tyrolese Germans) and denied it to the Italian municipality. Inconsistency was equal on both sides—but Wilson wielded the big stick. The raid of Gabriele D'Annunzio and Major Carlo Reina of the Second Grenadiers was a revolt of the best elements in Italy against the bullying of Wilson and the secret hostility of the Allies.

To the Italians, Italy's share in the war had been extremely important. But at the Peace Conference her spoils had been on a par with those of Serbia and Belgium. Italian pride winced under repeated affronts. The Italian Army writhed beneath the implications that it was incommensurably inferior to those of the Allied states, bitterly resented the lack of popular triumphs, pomp and parades. The communists at home instituted a senseless anti-militarist campaign and assaulted officers indiscriminately, sparing neither decorations nor glorious infirmities. The Italian Army was by the summer of 1919 a center of raw resentment.

The nationalists went out of their minds over the refusal of the Peace Conference to countenance the Treaty of London and Italian territorial expansion beyond the Adriatic (quite naturally; it was for such expansion that they had made war). The

meanness of the Allies in practically excluding Italy from their veiled schemes for annexations in Africa and the Near East, the stubborn bad logic of the President in sacrificing Germans and Majars while protecting Slovenes and Croats (whom the Italians disliked more), the hostile, high-handedness of the French in the Balkans—these whipped the nationalists into a state of insane fury, which they succeeded in communicating to a large part of the soldiers and the more volatile political elements. The war—they said—had been a failure. Italy, victorious on the field, had been swindled at the Peace Conference. Her enemies had treated her less badly than her Allies, etc.

The effect of this widespread propaganda on common men was enormous and immediate. The private soldier, at first bewildered, eventually reasoned to a logical conclusion. Since successful war had led only to failure, either (a) it was a mistake ever to fight at all, or (b) the leaders were such fools that they had not known how to profit by victory; in either case the best thing to do was to break the heads of the government and if possible of the monstrously ungrateful allies.<sup>2</sup> The result was in many individuals the growth of discontent almost to the point of labor revolution, and in others the raising of patriotism to monomania—according to temperament.

The democratic “interventionists” who had fought to make the world safe for democracy and not “for Paris,”<sup>3</sup> who had stood loyally for Wilson and for

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<sup>2</sup> The words are my own; the reasoning that of the weekly periodical, *Unità*.

<sup>3</sup> H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*.

“Wilsonism against Wilson,” were dumfounded by the President’s failure to see in the attitude of Fiume a clear and legitimate case of self-determination. Even Bissolati had demanded the annexation of Italian Fiume. The events of July precipitated the mixture: Fiume must be saved and to hell with Wilson.

### THE ESSENTIAL FACTS

Until 1876 Fiume was an insignificant, fishing town inhabited almost exclusively by Italians, who had managed, despite a hundred obstacles, to keep a large share of their municipal independence and to be recognized as a self-governing *corpus separatum* under a Hungarian governor.<sup>4</sup> “The first great enterprise of the (Hungarian) State after taking over the railways (1876) was to make Fiume the great emporium of Hungarian commerce. A railway line was accordingly laid down from Budapest, right across the country boring through the Karst, to the port, rebuilding and extending the harbor and furnishing it with wharves and warehouses.”<sup>5</sup>

By 1914 Fiume consisted definitely of three parts, the old city, inhabited almost exclusively by the majority forming Italians; the Croatian suburb of Sushak which had grown up across the Fiumara behind the railroad yards and small Port Baross; and the new city of stores, hotels and warehouses—the product of a foreign commercial set, chiefly Germans and Majars.

Fiume sent volunteers to the Italian ranks, protected the Italian prisoners and aided them to

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<sup>4</sup> Edoardo Susmel, *Fiume Attraverso la Storia*.

<sup>5</sup> *Austria of the Austrians and Hungary of the Hungarians*.

escape, and in 1918 smuggled missionaries across the lines to convince the Allies (and the Italians) of their desire for "redemption." The Fiumian deputy Ossoinack (October 18, 1918), asserted in the Chamber at Budapest Fiume's right as *corpus separatum* to self-determination. After the flight of the Hungarian governor, the Italian element, aided by the Germans and Majars, who preferred Italy to Yugoslavia, formed (October 30, 1918) an unofficial National Council and declared Fiume annexed to Italy, placing the city meanwhile under the protection of the United States, "mother of liberty and universal democracy." Even the Croat minority—the new industrial workers—were divided, some desiring union with Yugoslavia, others the proclamation of an independent republic. On October 29, the first Italian flag was raised.

The Croat soldiery who arrived the next day caused it to be lowered and substituted their own banner. British and French and American troops arrived and an Italian warship or two, but still no Italian soldiers and the city waited in anguish. Then an inexplicable thing happened: on November 17, two regiments of Italian grenadiers entered the city and General San Marzano took command of it in the "name of Italy, the Allies and the Associate." From that moment Fiume was lost for Yugoslavia. The authority for San Marzano's action has never been disclosed; the Serbs who left the city three hours previously had been assured by the Allied commanders that Fiume would not be turned over to Italy.

During the ensuing ten months the members of the

Fiumian National Council—who had taken formal control on November 23—behaved in a way greatly to increase the number of partisans of an independent republic.<sup>6</sup> It was this party—certainly a minority—which influenced Woodrow Wilson. But the rule of the National Council none the less lacked a regular elective basis.

American, French and British troops sided morally with the Croats. The French established a naval base which really served to furnish Yugoslavia—most of which the Italians considered enemy territory—with French commercial products. French soldiers fraternized with Croat girls, wore Croat colors and said pretty freely what they thought of Italy. The Italians were not backward in expressing themselves about the manner and political morals of the *Armée d'Orient*. The result was an open clash and a killing of French troops by Italian soldiers and civilians—the “Fiumian vespers.” More than 25 French were killed.

An inter-allied inquest decided that “the French provoked, the Italians reacted excessively,” and decided to suppress the French base and change the Italian troops, to dissolve the Fiumian Legion and the National Council and until true elections could be held, to place the town under inter-allied administration, with order guaranteed by British police of Italian origin, from Malta.

The military command was still to be held by an Italian general and the Italian troops would greatly outnumber the Allies. There was no thought of handing Fiume to Croatia.

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<sup>6</sup> They were accused of frantic profiteering.



But the decisions leaked out in a garbled form. Never, even under Hungary, had Fiume had a foreign police force! The Rome Government's zeal in carrying out the decisions before the French had removed their naval base spread a panic. The Fiumial National Council and Legion prepared to resist, the Italian population of Fiume lay down in the streets to prevent the departure of the grenadiers (August 25 and 27) and soon through patriotic Italy a single thought ran like a flame: "Save Fiume at any cost."

The originators of the Fiume raid were seven junior officers of the Second Grenadiers who took a vow to "save the city or die in the attempt." The chief organizer was their major, Carlo Reina, commander of the First Battalion, who got in touch with Captain Host Venturi of the Fiumian Legion, made all preparations, and voluntarily offered the command to Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The latter, who considered himself responsible for having thrown Italy into war, had been among those Italians who had most suffered from the treatment at the hands of the Allies and Wilson. He had threatened the government with revolution in his speech to have been pronounced on the Capitol, and had discussed the possibilities of a Garibaldian overland "attack" with General Grazioli in Venice.<sup>7</sup> The offer from Reina to captain a raid for which all preparations had been made came to him like manna from heaven and he accepted with alacrity. The

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<sup>7</sup> See General Robilant's speech in the Senate, in which he practically accuses Generals Diaz and Grazioli of having been favorable to the raid, and D'Annunzio's speech at Fiume (Sept. 22), "I say that the Fiume enterprise was the undertaking of the whole Italian Army."



expedition had found a leader whose fame could shield his followers. But it is necessary to point out that between the possible consequences of such an act to Carlo Reina, major of grenadiers, and to the poet-hero-adventurer, there was a world of difference. The latter risked civil justice and a few months' imprisonment, the former, court martial and ruin.

The raid succeeded perfectly. D'Annunzio, who rose from a bed of fever, refused to do anything on the tenth of the month because of superstition, but left Venice on September eleventh. He found the grenadiers at Ronchi near Isonzo Mouth, they piled into *camions* and motor cars, and set out for Fiume, filled with incredible enthusiasm. Soldiers sent to stop them went over to and accompanied them. Two hundred volunteers set out from Ronchi, three thousand arrived at Fiume about eleven in the morning of September 12th. By six o'clock that evening D'Annunzio was installed in the ex-governor's palace, and, notwithstanding the presence of Allied troops and warships, the acknowledged lord of Fiume.

News of the occupation caused Italians all over the world to go mad with enthusiasm. Generals, veteran Army and Navy officers, the latter with their ships, soldiers of all arms, the pick of the forces for valor; civilians of all ages, made their way to Fiume as volunteers. Italians in the United States and far-away Argentina took up collections for the poet soldier. Distinguished men of many nations sent their approval by telegram or letter. D'Annunzio and his followers had defied the "gamblers

of Paris," and a great part of the world's public opinion was behind them. Though the Italian Government severely disapproved the act, Italy stood compact behind her latest Garibaldi, and government orders could not be executed. Only the socialists and the masses of disillusioned industrial workers scoffed at, condemned and drew aside from the adventure, disdainfully.

### GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

English speaking persons hold it axiomatic that a boaster must be something of a bluffer. To a large number of Italians boasting is the becoming garment of great deeds. It takes a long time to realize that they can shelter their real earnestness behind verbal flamboyancy just as easily as Americans behind sarcasm or Englishmen under indifference. Where an American feels only histrionics, the Italian thrills with stiff determination and is excited to heroism. Thus Gabriele D'Annunzio represents to most foreigners an incurable wind bag, a consummate comedian and a picturesque nuisance. To the average Italian he epitomizes the longings of modern Italy. To his nation he is the peerless prophet of "Italianity," the master of the fiery Word, a "column of never consumed fire."<sup>8</sup> He means to his nation the hypostasis of the national life—what Kitchener meant to the English or Roosevelt to Americans. Like them he has his opponents, detractors, enemies. To his followers he is all that man can hope to be—a poet, a soldier, a leader, a hero, a

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<sup>8</sup> The poet's own definition of himself.

devil with the women—in short, “the greatest of the Italians.”

To define, even to describe this man of many facets, is no easy task. A recognized poet at eighteen, he has been a successful journalist, society leader, novelist, has been elected deputy, and planned war flights over Vienna. Always he has remained a consistent though curiously limited artist. He has captained a serious nation in one of its highest endeavors. We think of an aged and somewhat decaying voluptuary, the hero of a thousand beds, and instead we find him at fifty-six directing a complicated undertaking in its least details, manifesting an unrivaled physical and intellectual energy. This is but the latest of his surprises; his has been a life of continual renewals. From the sensual, talented boy, eager for the obvious prizes of life, he passed to the disdainful superman, the philosopher meditating on his own death, the emotional voluptuary toying with ideas of suicide. The fleeing debtor became the intellectual lion of Paris. Then, at the age of fifty-two <sup>9</sup> “the dandy put on a uniform, the poseur showed a contempt for death, and the voluble boaster a capacity for firm instant action.” <sup>10</sup>

He recalls Cola di Rienzo: like Hannibal he carries poison about him in a ring to end his life. At times he has been unpopular: there are chapters in his past that do him no credit. In 1893 to-day's hero was condemned to five months' imprisonment for adultery. The romantic *Comandante* of Fiume had as a deputy sought the benches of the Socialists,

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<sup>9</sup> He was born March 12, 1863, at Pescara on the Adriatic.

<sup>10</sup> See the article, “The Spectacle of D'Annunzio,” by J. J. Squire, in the *London Mercury*, December, 1920.

remarking sententiously, "I go toward life!"

He is hard to explain unless we remember that the one real interest of Gabriele D'Annunzio during his fifty-nine years has been the glorification of Gabriele D'Annunzio. His energies have been devoted to his art, but his art has been his life and his life has been one constant devotion to his own ego. At a certain moment the young artist egoist, whose naïve charm and magnetism have lasted to this day, seized the meaning of absolute egoism (in a philosophic sense). The egoism of the child became the egoism of the intellectual anarch, of Max Stirner and Nietzsche. He knew himself the only living consciousness in a world of scenery and masks. God, humanity, his country, groups of other men, his friends and lovers—what were they but the creation of his own mind and their supposed will his will. Such a belief closes the doors to sympathy and encases him as in a palace of ice, to live on himself, starkly alone. Inevitably there are lapses from this lofty position, but on the whole he has maintained it. Though he has written of all nations, exalted many men—it is heroism that he adores—he himself is the real hero. "I would rather die," he explained to Le Bargy, the French actor, "than lead a mediocre life."

In his fear of the mediocre as well as in his insatiate vanity we need only see a natural failure to achieve the complete spiritual congelation of supermanhood. In his heart he sometimes melts; he heeds the judgment of the herd; he admits the semi-importance of other beings than himself, other nations than his own. From the point of vantage

of the absolute anarchy even to despise is to admit. But most of his action goes in the face of common opinion, is above the tickling of satisfied vanity, true to the instinct that caused him years ago to "hearken to the voice of the magnanimous Zarathustra" and prepare "in art the advent of the Uebermensch."<sup>11</sup>

The phrase "in art" is significant. He alone is the hero of all his gorgeous, slightly mildewed novels. His art becomes an integral part of his own life—not as a "purification of the passions" but as an excitant or a second digestion.

How then can one explain his patriotism, his medals for valor, his flight over Vienna?

An acute commentator has found in love of everything Italian the only idea that threads his entire work of prose and poetry, and states<sup>12</sup> that "the war spurred D'Annunzio to try to realize his poetry and identify his own biography with the history of Italy." It is true that he has never failed to crack up his country. His poetry drips with passages wherein praise of Italy is mingled with blood, war and heroes. He exalts Italian courage, seamanship, culture, the Italian past, present and future. In a poem to his Elect Nation he sees "the Latin Sea covered with slaughter in thy war." He warns the Young King under pain of revolution that the epoch of Italy's humiliation must end. As an aviator he shrank from nothing save personal obscurity and the anonymity of the others who risked as much as he. He exerted an enormous and thoroughly beneficent influence over his companions and fellow soldiers.

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<sup>11</sup> See Preface to his novel, *Il Trionfo della Morte*.

<sup>12</sup> Aldo Sorani, *Il Secolo*, January 6, 1921.

His words aroused and inspired; his flaming eloquence struck fire from dull natures. He never shrank from a heroic death, he stuck out by word and deed for what he considered his country's due—"Now and forever, O Italy, of thee alone, for thee alone, in thee alone."

Such patriotism ranks him a national leader but it does not absolve him from the charge of all but impenetrable egoism. How he enjoys the realization of his country's glories! The moral quality of his patriotism is visible in the statement of Stelio D'Effrena, of all his heroes the one whom he has set himself most closely to imitate:

"I glory in being a Latin and I recognize a barbarian in every man of a different blood."

To the service of himself and his country he brings a strong will, a conviction of personal superiority, a lucid intelligence (which he occasionally refuses to use), strong bodily energy and appetites, common sense, personal magnetism and an unrivaled command of the spoken and written word that has made him master of a large number of his compatriots, men and women alike. He has bulked almost as large in the contemporary history of his nation as any other individual.

It is as superman that he has stepped beyond the bonds of common morality and persuaded so many persons that such is the right of his genius. He has contracted debts (and paid them), sampled all the phials of physical experience, accepted the women who offered themselves and the men who offered homage (and gifts) as his natural subjects. Per-



haps he has sometimes been bored with them. Considering no one but himself, a mottled light and dark figure in ordinary life, a fine soldier, superb when defying the Paris Supreme Council, the Italian Premier or the British Government, he is somewhat disquieting in his occasional vulgarity and far from noble in the sacrifice to his insatiable self of the property, happiness and lives of his infatuated slaves.

Strange as it is in a writer of such power and beauty, his imagination is limited. This has caused him often to fall into unimportant plagiarism, has prevented the characters of his novels from being convincing, and most important, has forced him to the plane of real experience, actually to *live* in order to *know* all the fancies born in his brain. He has had to *try* where another would have been content to *imagine*. Thus pushed toward reality, he has succeeded in living the life he most desired . . . “among women, sculptors, musicians, poets, princes, as in a *Decameron*.” Add to this realism an unusual sensitiveness to physical sensation and no great delicacy of emotion, and his ordinary life becomes somewhat clear. Consider this characteristic in the light of his ambition and his patriotism and the Fiume episode, that thousand and second *Arabian Night*, shines lucently.

For such a man, at a certain moment late in his career, a moment of his country's trouble and peril, found himself suddenly the absolute monarch of a city of forty-five thousand people, backed in his actions by a good cause and the sentiment of a nation, the commander of an army of ten thousand dare-devils facing a possible national enemy, a very

real army with machine guns, aëroplanes and artillery; the admiral of a fleet comprising a dreadnought, cruisers and destroyers; a sublime nuisance in the eyes of four Governments and the greatest of living heroes in the eyes of millions. Is it any wonder that it went to his head or that until the guns of another warship recalled him to reality, he dreamed of Italian revolution and international revolt, with himself over it all, unique, supreme?

## THE FAILURE OF FRANCESCO SAVERIO NITTI

Italy might have annexed Fiume without any great risk of those nameless reprisals which Italian statesmen so feared. A tired world, which stood by impassively while a Roumanian army sacked Budapest and Polish imperialists stamped on the toes of Russians and Germans, would hardly have intervened to oppose a determined Italian policy. The Croats themselves realized this fact; after the occupation of Fiume their only hope lay in the Italian communists. The latter were not strong enough—not fundamentally international enough—to fly in the face of patriotic opinion. At the same time the Italian statesmen lacked nerve. Orlando defied the Conference only to sneak back to Paris in the dead of night. Nitti, his successor, had prodigious respect for American economic power and believed in subordinating sentiment to economics—a belief for which his countrymen have never forgiven him. So the annexation did not take place.

When Nitti heard D'Annunzio had started on a Garibaldian raid to Fiume he lost his head. Orders went forth to arrest the poet. But it was Nitti's

fate to be disobeyed. Unable to do anything else, Nitti's representatives at Paris asked the Conference not to act against Fiume, and France, Britain and America withdrew their troops and ships of war. Nitti proclaimed a blockade of the city. "Nittian" and "D'Annunzian" troops faced each other in apparent hostility. D'Annunzio (September 27, 1919) scornfully refused to treat with or recognize the Government of Francesco Saverio Nitti. But really the regular and irregular troops were on the best of terms. The blockade was a purely sentimental affair which did not prevent the swarms of volunteers from reaching Fiume or D'Annunzio's emissaries from coming and going as they chose throughout the peninsula. For sixteen months, D'Annunzio's aviators used a field within the regular lines, and the regulars furnished the legionaries with arms and munitions. By October 5th, the Government had promised D'Annunzio a loan. Count Sforza, then Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, unhesitatingly admitted that the Fiume incident might be useful to Italy on condition it remained limited to Fiume. It was not that the Government protected D'Annunzio but rather that, in the face of Italian public opinion, the Prime Minister was helpless.

He made direct overtures to the poet promising the latter money and the title of Count of Fiume if he would withdraw. When the poet haughtily refused the Prime Minister made other proposals.

In the meantime he treated with the other nations for a solution of the entire question. Several proposals were made, including an ignoble offer to

cede Albanian Skutari to Yugoslavia in return for Fiume—fortunately stopped by Wilson.<sup>13</sup> They culminated in the direct negotiations with the Yugoslaves at Pallanza,<sup>14</sup> (May 11, 1920) which might have been successful had not the Nitti Government fallen at the critical moment. But it is hard to imagine this man daring those extreme measures that were necessary to reduce D'Annunzio.

Francesco Saverio Nitti had many of the qualities of statesmanship. He foresaw the coming change in the conception of property and was willing to accept and accelerate it. He realized that only the rich could pay for the war. His political insight revealed economic factors at the basis of the European crisis and the Italian difficulties as a detail in the general confusion. The cures for Europe were peace, economy and hard work, not treaties and conquests. In some respects this much hated man, whose mocking smile, many chins, pudgy body and dimpled hands lent themselves so perfectly to caricature, was far superior to his detractors. But he lacked backbone and the courage of his convictions; the moment and the milieu were against him. In practice he simply backed down. Through his representative Tittoni, he signed an absurd and humiliating agreement with Greece. He allowed his ideas to be blocked by the Socialists, by the bureaucracy, by the Army, by the Allies and Wilson, by D'Annunzio. During his year of government Italy did not count abroad, while at home he did little

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<sup>13</sup> See the official British *Correspondence Relating to the Adriatic Question*.

<sup>14</sup> See the *Libro Verde sui Negoziati diretti . . . per la Pace Adriatica*.

but establish a reputation for remissness and financial scheming. His was a policy of peace at any price and this policy the majority of his countrymen, still smarting over the Peace Conference, refused to confirm.

## THE LEGIONARIES DIFFER

Back in Fiume, the National Council hailed D'Annunzio as "divine leader," and resigned its power into his hands. Volunteers, many of them illustrious, continued to flock in until the town overflowed with them. Luigi Rizzo, who sank a dreadnought, Generals Tamajo and Ceccherini, the son of ex-Prime Minister Orlando, were happy to be numbered among the deserters. "The real Italy," said the *Comandante*, "is in Fiume."

Such an opinion soon led to an almost open break with some of his followers. Many of the volunteers considered the occupation of Fiume as a spring board to greater deeds in Dalmatia and an armed conflict with the Yugoslavs. D'Annunzio immediately accepted the formula, *Fiume plus Dalmatia*, sent a message to his "Dalmatian brothers," encouraged the abortive landing at Traù, and finally went to Zara and obtained a promise from Admiral Millo never to abandon the city.

Major Reina and the grenadiers had, however, planned the raid exclusively to save Fiume and realized keenly the blow they had thereby struck at military discipline. The continual arrival of new legionaries of a lazy dissolute type alarmed them and (September 23, 1919) the major issued an appeal to the Army asking no more men to desert.

This appeal caused the *Comandante* to explode with rage. Reina, he declared, had not understood the greatness of the Fiume action. D'Annunzio desired to attract to his cause the entire Italian Army, in preparation for revolution and a march on Rome that should make him dictator. Had he not promised the Romans that he would return? He had twice conquered the capital with words, he said, and it was his intention to conquer it a third time with arms. Fiume was not an end in itself, a city to annex to Italy, but the starting point for a vast immortal movement. As such the city must never be relinquished.

Consistently therefore, the dictator submitted the Badoglio proposals of December to the National Council and a popular plebiscite and when both had accepted, annulled the vote. By this time the orderly element had completely succumbed. In December the first of his volunteers began to abandon the city and during the following year they trickled away from him.

### FIUMANISM

Fiume had ceased to be a city to be saved and had become a symbol to be worshiped. The point at issue was no longer Fiume but Fiumanism, defined as a "great and universal spiritual ideal of liberty and justice that interests all peoples and spreads out marvelously beyond the narrow circle of a territorial question." The occupation of Fiume had revealed absolutely "new forms of life," whose aims were, like the deadly sins, seven in number. Briefly, these came down to a verbose desire to over-



turn the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations and the British Empire by an Italian revolution and a world uprising, leading to a new fraternal association of all peoples. An easy task, as will be noted, for a poet-dictator.

Fiumanism as an ideal could only be realized through Politics. But to remain in Fiume the *Comandante* needed Poetry, to be effective he needed an Army which, if small, must be composed of wild young dare-devils and malcontents, who must therefore find life at Fiume a round of Pleasure. So Fiumanism came to signify a life of pleasure. Naturally too the army had to be fed and dissension avoided; Fiumanism demanded Provender and Protection.

Politics, Poetry, Pleasure, Provender and Protection—these are the keys that unlock the otherwise impenetrable mystery of the *Comandante's* conduct at Fiume.

Lack of revolutionary experience caused D'Annunzio to seek advice. So he turned to Alceste De Ambris, the leader of the syndicalists of Parma (and made him chief of cabinet); to the founder of *fascismo*, Benito Mussolini, ex-editor of the Socialist *Avanti!*; to the semi-anarchist Mario Carli; to a jingo journalist, Corrado Zoli. Under their experienced direction he engaged in a vast work of revolutionary propaganda throughout Italy. He entered into relations with the anarchists and the radical Federation of the Toilers of the Sea. Unsuccessful overtures were made to the Socialist Party, and constant relations maintained with the more pugnacious of the military chiefs dreaming

of dictatorship. D'Annunzio consulted *fascisti* and manufacturers of war material. His "recruiting officers" went everywhere and wrote to friends asking for more volunteers—"even crooks, in fact, better." They were promised a joyous life. When they arrived they were thoroughly inspired with hatred for the Government and taught to sing songs about attacking the Quirinal and throwing bombs on the Parliament. A "special secretary's office" was formed exclusively for the preparation of revolutionary plans involving marches on Rome—and to provide jobs for the poet's lady friends.

The Fiume Government endeavored to enter into direct relations with Secretary Lansing at Washington and sent messages to the United States by a well-known architect.

Against the Treaty of Versailles Fiume established connection with German militarists and Hungarian communists, encouraged the labor and "autonomous" parties in Croatia. D'Annunzio personally wrote to Tchitcherin, asking the Bolsheviks to send material and moral aid to a "fellow revolutionary." The "League of Fiume" was announced in opposition to the "pseudo-Society of Nations," whose representatives the poet bombarded with manifestos.

Fiume threatened the British Empire with dire destruction. He whom Lord Curzon thoughtlessly denominated an "irresponsible adventurer," plotted with Egyptian and Indian rebels and offered "men and money" to the Irish Republic. Mayor McSwiney was "a new victim claiming vengeance."

But in the meantime a poet was, voluntarily,

but none the less truly, exiled in a dull provincial town offering few of the delights of culture. The waters of the Carnaro are unrivaled, but "the moment you see Fiume all romance leaves your mind." Lord of this ugliness was an artist who demanded that his life be a never ending poem.

D'Annunzio set about to create Poetry. We must admit he did his best. He began an interminable series of extraordinarily well written speeches and read them to all his "brothers in Rome and in Christ"—meaning Italians—who would listen. He instituted a kind of twilight dialogue between himself—a bald-headed man on a balcony—and the crowd below. He did most of the talking but the crowd liked it. He declared his own bald pate a symbol of bull headed tenacity—a *testa di ferro* or iron head—and persuaded his favorite aviators to shave their young locks in imitation.

A hotel—successively Hotel Deak, Hotel Wilson, Hotel Orlando—was rechristened Hotel *Testa di Ferro* and a propaganda sheet in Milan had to be called the *Testa di Ferro* as well. A restaurant, the "Golden Stag," became the *Ornithoryncus* and an excellent local variety of cherry brandy "blood of the Morlacks," after an ancient Dalmatian tribe.

Guests arrived from all parts of Italy. The poet's love of music was almost daily satisfied by the excellent pianist, Luisa Baccara of Venice, who settled down in Fiume. And the delights of Fiume rivaled those of the famous Capua. Over a group of artists and sympathizers, a court of talent and easy going beauty, Signorina Baccara ruled like the queen of a petty court.

The poet had once written: <sup>15</sup> "I believe that every man of imagination (*intelletto*) can, to-day as ever, create from life his own fable." At Fiume, D'Annunzio certainly created his, and in his own image.

The poet possessed Fiume in just such a vast orgy as his hero, Stelio D'Effrena, had dreamed. <sup>16</sup> The women of Fiume outnumbered the men as five to four. Five thousand women of the city were therefore free to welcome the legionaries as the latter most desired. As the *Comandante* expressed it, "the name of all the women of Fiume is Ardor." It was these women, their ranks swelled by others from Italy, who gave to the occupation its violent orgiastic character. <sup>17</sup>

Had the *Comandante* endeavored to restrain these excesses or enforce discipline, life in Fiume would have lost some of its popularity. But he did nothing to restrain them. His weakness for women became if anything more marked. And there was no lack of eager material. The worse his followers were, the more he seemed to like them. His particular favorites were the *arditi*—the special storm troops drawn to a considerable extent from the criminal classes and armed with knives and grenades. Something in their ferociousness appealed to him and instead of punishing those among them who, in the company of prostitutes, terrorized the civil hospital, he caused himself to be made their corporal.

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<sup>15</sup> See the novel *Il Fuoco*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> An officer who played an important part in the raid has stated that the conduct of the worst of the legionaries went "from murder to robbery, from cocaine to pederasty."

Much of the amusement of the people was of a less sinister character. Each group of soldiers had one or more festivities in its exclusive honor. And life became one continuous round of carnival. Lorenzo the Magnificent seemed to have returned and a population worn by five years of war, tedium and horror was grateful. The joys of Fiume attracted far more new volunteers than the cause of Fiume. Warships' crews could not be held. Young officers jumped at the chance to serve their country and enjoy themselves at the same time and dragged their soldiers with them, the latter sometimes unwilling. So many came and with such enthusiasm that the *Comandante* failed to realize how his extravagance and depravity were gradually alienating those stronger elements who could alone constitute a solid basis for serious action.

Certainly, despite his dissipation and his un-failing zest for pleasure, the *Comandante* never shirked his serious duties. The burden upon his shoulders was large. He had all the cares of a housewife without fixed income. In addition to Politics and Poetry and Pleasure, he had to forage for Provender. The mere food and drink of the legionaries and ladies cost prodigiously and were obtained with some difficulty. For many months the Croat peasants in the neighborhood ceased to send their products into the town. Money was subscribed by Italian colonies in foreign lands and by patriots at home. The Italian Red Cross brought in provisions. Friends and legionaries pirated away ships, the *Persia* and the *Cogne*, which the Government was obliged to ransom or see sold with

their cargoes at auction. The poet was continually short of money and economy was not among his virtues. Toward the end of his stay he seems to have been largely dependent upon the gifts of rich Italians: it is reported that he gave a dinner for a number of rich Milanese with their wives and personally kissed the lips of each lady whose husband contributed a sufficient sum. But economics remained a terrible preoccupation.

In such conditions the need for self-protection was large. The Fiumian courts, in the name of the King of Italy, condemned all who spread false news, scandals, or "unofficial versions of events"; all who complained or incited to desertion or spoke against the *Comandante*. Generals and admirals were kidnapped for hostile behavior. Horses and provisions were stolen from the regulars and arrests of the legionaries were followed by reprisals. "The God of Fiume is a cruel god," said the poet. His high-handedness knew no limits. He and his men were Italy, the others, skulkers and mud. Never would he yield Fiume—I doubt if he really wished to see it annexed to Italy—for Fiume meant power, glory, an unrivaled possibility for realizing revolution and dictatorship or, at the very least, a "glorious medieval dream."

## "THE ITALIAN REGENCY OF THE CARNARO"

One product of D'Annunzio while at Fiume justifies those who declare him something of a statesman. This was the compilation of a constitution for the "free State of Fiume," henceforth to be called the "Italian Regency of the Carnaro." In



this constitution there is some verbiage and nonsense, but it embodies a political ideal higher than that of any existing state. It is a pity that there was never an adequate opportunity for trying it out.

The "Italian Regency of the Carnaro" was founded on true democracy, on education, fundamental liberties and a form of guild organization. The national "religious and social institution" was music. It declared culture to be the "most luminous of far reaching arms" and sought to produce free and equal men and women.

The political organization—too complicated to be described here—was a mixture of universal suffrage with compulsory membership in one of ten guilds. Loafers and parasites and criminals lost their franchise. The most ultra democratic ideas were embodied, even the un-Italian insistence on the "laconic method in debate." The door was left open to a kind of guild socialism but closed on any socialism of bureaucrats and State interference. So far as I am aware there is no modern vision of an ideal political group which can be compared to the "Regency," unless it be the "great city" of Walt Whitman.

### FIUME GROWS A LITTLE WEARY

Such an ideal scheme of ultra democratic government by no means appealed to the merchants and leading citizens of Fiume. These citizens, who composed the National Council, had greeted the poet as a liberator and stood a great deal from him, but this they considered going too far. Still, so long as Hungary remained impotent, only Italy

could prevent the fate which they most disliked—absorption by the virile Croats. This is why most of them consistently preferred to be annexed to Italy rather than to be constituted as a free city, according to the ideas of Riccardo Zanella, formerly leader of the Italian Party, whom D'Annunzio drove from the city. As time went on, the faithful Fiumians broke into three groups of opinion; the fanatical partisans of the poet; the ever growing group of "autonomists," who desired to be rid of him; and a middle party, interested primarily in peace and anxious to get back to business. (This business party bitterly resented the new constitution; but there seemed no clear alternative and finally, with many misgivings they accepted it.) From this time on however the danger of an impartial plebiscite going against the *Comandante* was ever present.

### GIOLITTI, SFORZA AND THE TREATY OF RAPALLO

When Nitti fell, the irony of fate brought back to power that old fox, Giovanni Giolitti, the most cunning and successful of Italian politicians. The old man who had been hooted as a traitor five years before, returned (June, 1920) with the unanimous consent of all parties. Every one else had tried and failed to bring back peace to Italy. Giolitti could at least bring the unruly bureaucrats to heel and make the trains run. He might even find a way to down the socialists and solve the Adriatic question, which was rapidly running the country to bankruptcy.

Giolitti returned—humiliating his chief opponents by appointing them senators—and with him his

invariable formula: never face a strong opponent or fly in the face of public opinion; wait until the wind turns and then strike before he can recover. Accordingly the Prime Minister yielded to the Socialists at the time of the factory occupation, but with guile in his heart. "Giolitti," said the Italians, who have an uncontrollable admiration for cunning, "knows his chickens."

With Giolitti there came as Minister for Foreign Affairs the former Under Secretary, Carlo Sforza, who had taken part in the interrupted negotiations with the Yugoslavs at Pallanza.

The wind on the Adriatic had certainly changed. Britain and France were ready to uphold Italy in order to reach a solution. Woodrow Wilson no longer counted. Sforza and Giolitti dropped the naval thesis, which demanded control of the eastern shore of the Adriatic, relinquished Valona to the rebellious Albanians, and prepared to yield Dalmatia. But they needed the support of the Army and accordingly demanded that the Yugoslavs agree to the "Schneeberg frontier" in the Northeast. The Yugoslavs had formed the "little Entente" with Roumania and Czechoslovakia, and were anxious for Italy's backing against a possible return of The Hapsburgs. Italy, too, desired to prevent this return and magnanimously accepted . . . on condition of reaching a satisfactory conclusion of the Adriatic problem. Accordingly the Treaty of Rapallo was signed November 12, 1920, ratified by the Yugoslav Regent November 20th, and became law in Italy December 19. By it Italy acquired all of Istria and the best possible frontier in Venetia

Julia, possession of Zara in Dalmatia and an island or two, and the independence of Fiume within certain frontiers. This solution satisfied common sense and the Italian people and the Army. The hands of the Government were for the first time free to deal with the *Comandante* and his unruly legionaries.

## THE POET SPURNS THE TREATY

It is possible the Reina-D'Annunzio raid saved Fiume by preventing a weak Italian Government from giving it up. But this phase had long been superseded. In December, 1920, the *Comandante's* vanity seems to have driven everything else from his head. He began to take his own speeches seriously. He disdainfully refused to recognize the Treaty of Rapallo, even though the Government offered, after due plebiscite, to recognize the "Italian Regency." The legionaries violently extended their occupation to lands outside the limits assigned to Fiume by the Treaty. Their leader demanded immediate preliminary recognition of the "Regency" in order to frustrate the application of the Treaty and thus put himself in direct opposition to a measure that had been legalized and approved by the Italian nation.

The poet's refusal to recognize the Treaty was simple impertinence. But his isolation at Fiume, the flattery of his subordinates, his relations with anarchists, *fascisti* and revolutionaries, had disturbed his balance.

Italy was still governed from Rome.

D'Annunzio sincerely believed the real Italy to

be at Fiume. "Why," said his foreign secretary, Corrado Zoli, "should we respect a treaty between two governments both of which are destined to fall within a short time? A Croatian revolt will prostrate Yugoslavia and Italy will rise in revolution." In vain Benito Mussolini, an acknowledged lieutenant, hastened to approve the Treaty and warned the Poet of his isolation. D'Annunzio counted on the aid of the Navy and was sure no one would dare raise a hand against him. Entrenched in this belief he began to utter a series of sanguinary rodomontades, letting himself go.

He reiterated his threats against the regular generals. He spoke of the inevitable sacrifice. Though he did not for a moment believe the Government dare order an attack or the regulars obey such an order, he took full rhetorical advantage of the occasion. Between the execution of the Treaty of Rapallo and Fiume, there should be seen lying his own "bloody body." He had long welcomed such a "beautiful death."

"The crime is about to be consummated, fraternal blood about to be shed.

"Those about to die, salute you. . . .

"This was written, and this is marvelous." And so on, without end.

His followers, many of them mere lads, listened and believed. They would not be behind their beloved leader in devotion to a noble idea.

## THE FIVE DAYS OF FIUME

When the Prime Minister and his executor, General Caviglia, became convinced that nothing

short of violence would cause D'Annunzio to climb down from his insane loftiness, they ordered the Forty-fifth Division to advance, hoping still that violence and civil strife might be averted. Military law was proclaimed in Trieste and near-by towns and December 24 chosen to begin the attack because no newspapers would be printed on Christmas Day. The Forty-fifth behaved admirably. Theirs was a bitter task. A few went over to the legionaries, but only a few.

The legionaries defended their position with great violence; they were unquestionably the pick of the Army. Their arms had been regularly furnished them by the State. During the 24th the regulars advanced, Christmas Day brought a truce. D'Annunzio listened attentively for the sound of revolution in Italy. Finally, by the wireless of the "neutral" dreadnought, *Dante Alighieri*, which remained at the Fiume dock, he sent a message offering to withdraw his men within the limits of the Treaty frontier. The message remained unanswered. There were dead on both sides by this time. Neither side dreamed the other would go so far.

Where was the Italian revolution? A certain Marsich, the head of the Venetian *fascio*, spread a rumor to the effect that the *Comandante* had been killed. It was a desperate attempt, but it failed. Venetians looked serious, predicted trouble and did nothing. Could it be possible that Italians cared nothing for the death of the greatest among them? The *Comandante* listened. . . .

The bombardment began on December 26—not



heavily but inexorably. The Fiumians had displayed a calm courage during the fighting but the town could not stand much of this new kind of thing. Still the poet hoped in the Navy, of which he was the idol.

At three in the afternoon the Government dreadnought *Andrea Doria* swung lazily by the port and when opposite the governor's palace where D'Annunzio lived, neatly dropped three six-inch shells on his window sill! The *Comandante*, badly stunned and slightly wounded (but more in pride than in body) realized how close he had come to leaving his "bloody body" in Fiume. His cause was hopeless. This was the moment for the leader to place himself at the head of his troops and seek in the romance of a lost cause his "beautiful death." Host Venturi, commander of the National Defense, was willing and ready. A simple soldier might have done this and gone down the years as a martyr. But not a superman. The Italians had abandoned him. They were, in his words, "a people of cowards for whom it is not worth while to die." So while in the streets regulars and legionaries fell in the resistance he had ordered, the poet continued to drag on a distasteful existence, regretting, to be sure, that death had not spared him what he defined as "the shame of being an Italian." He resigned his powers to the National Council, who capitulated "with honor" to General Caviglia. The "beautiful death" was realized, but *in corpore vile*.

A few days later the former *Comandante*, after several more speeches, retired to a beautiful villa on

## FIUME O MORTE

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Garda Lake with Signorina Luisa Baccara. His sleep, he announced, would be brief.

A few months later the newspapers reported him as defining the Fiume tragedy "an affair of youth."

Prime Minister Giolitti, with equal nonchalance, called it a "simple police measure."

Phrase against phrase, the poet was worsted.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE REVOLUTION THAT NEVER WAS

For two years, while the Fiume question dragged like a ball and chain on the feet of Italy, her hands were paralyzed by the threatening sledge hammer of social revolution. The Italian workmen had slipped into the hands of new leaders, exasperated by army rule, hypnotized by Lenin's success in Russia, brutalized by the war.

While the nationalists plotted for a military dictatorship and D'Annunzio fired his pride by promises of a march on Rome, the labor leaders threatened a much more probable future—bolshevism. And nearly every one, at one time or another, believed in at least a temporary revolution. The financiers and industrial owners scoffed—and sent their stocks and ready money out of the country. Real reconstruction or settling down was impossible in view of impending social catastrophe. For two years moderate-minded Italy lived in fear of the two bogies—a military *coup d'état* and a social revolution—neither of which ever so much as materialized.

### RADICAL TENDENCIES BEFORE THE WAR

Italy, said Frederick Engels, was the first capitalist nation, the land where banking, bookkeeping, large cities and middle class supremacy first de-

veloped. But in recent years the Italian middle classes have done little in self-defense, depending for protection upon the "automatic action of capital." And in this gentle land there has for decades existed a handful of incurable revolutionaries ready at any moment to light a flame of insurrection in the belief that such a blaze would sweep the country. There still exists a sturdy group of "organized anarchists." Though the majority of the radical leaders become converted to conservatism in later life, the Socialist Party itself always remained compactly radical.

The Italian socialists have indeed been the most consistently radical party in Europe. Owing to the late growth of national consciousness, the early patriots were radicals and the first radicals were patriots. Without counting the anarchists (expelled from the Socialist Party in 1892) the Italian ranks have always contained two or more tendencies, a radico-patriotic tendency crusading throughout the world in the cause of all the oppressed, and an intransigent "syndicalist" strain that believes in root and branch extermination of the existing order. The latter were in one respect the forerunners of the modern bolsheviks and early urged "direct action." Between the two extremes the large body of the Party adhered to a strict Marxism; swayed by the patriotic reformists, they took for many years an active part in the national life and seemed, under the influence of Giolitti, likely to become followers of a "monarchical socialism" like that of pre-war Germany. But the Lybian war destroyed the authority of the reformists and it was declared in 1912 that

“on account of its revolutionary essence, the Socialist Party can be only a party of agitation and education, not a governing party.” The reformists and Free Masons were expelled.

Two years later this triumphant spirit of rebellion broke out in the disorders of the Red Week. A street fight with the police at Bologna led to a general insurrection throughout Romagna and the Marches and for seven days (June 7 to June 14, 1914) the entire life of the nation was suspended. A few of the smaller towns proclaimed a local republic. But the movement could obviously lead nowhere and the General Confederation of Labor put an end to it. Revolution in Italy lacked a fulcrum.

With the outbreak of world war, patriotism and internationalism were for the first time in open contrast throughout Europe.

### ITALIAN SOCIALISM AND THE WAR

The economic ideals of socialism—common ownership of the means of production—are not necessarily wrapped up in any belief in international solidarity among the workers. It might even be shown how, in given circumstances, a communistic nation could have as much interest as a capitalist nation in the commercial extermination of a rival, the appropriation of its natural resources, etc. So long as socialism is unrealized, however, international solidarity between the workers probably constitutes a tactical advantage; after universal socialization the advantages of international alliance might conceivably disappear. Thus on the mere basis of enlightened self-interest, the prevention of

war, in a socialist as in a capitalist world, seems unrealizable. In point of fact, when the test came, there was hardly a socialist in whom the feeling of human brotherhood did not prove to be weaker than affection for his particular nation.

The socialists had themselves foreseen this danger and to avoid it had spent much time in unprofitable discussion. It is interesting to note however that while the majority had understood their impotence against patriotic sentimentalism, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg (Stuttgart, 1907), had insisted that the socialists should not only oppose the coming of war but once in war should utilize the period "to accelerate the downfall of capitalistic domination." The only large party among the warring nations to carry out these injunctions were the Italians. Yet on the whole, though its conduct was more broadly international than in other countries, the *Partito Socialista Ufficiale Italiano* remained a national party and certain representatives (Turati, Graziadei) at one time or another admitted an interest in the outcome of the war. The formula officially adopted was "neither to help nor to hinder the war." Absolute internationalism, or the doctrine that socialists are essentially without a country, was only developed during the war itself. The international meetings at Zimmerwald and Kienthal in Switzerland (respectively September 1915 and April 1916) confirmed the international view.

The published disbelief in middle class remedies for the problems of international competition here showed a Russian influence for the first time pre-



dominant. Middle class government in Western Europe, whatever its sins, was in no sense tyrannical. But in Russia, under the late lamented dynasty of Romanoff, each successful war meant reaction, each defeat a gain for liberty. During the war the Russians succeeded in spreading their doctrines throughout Europe. "At Zimmerwald and at Kienthal, the new Messiah, Nikolai Lenin, received the baptism of Saint John."<sup>1</sup>

But Italian socialism had still to be released from sin and so late as May, 1917, the old Adam of social reform emerged in a manifesto of the Party which demanded a republican form of government, direct universal suffrage with proportional representation, the initiative, referendum and veto—reforms which were then considered sweeping but which, two years later, would have caused the followers of the new Messiah to yawn.

Conversion came with the second Russian revolution. The first revolution with its promise of prolonged warfare, left the Italian socialists cold, but when the bolsheviks seized the power and Lenin began to speak as the dictator of a gigantic nation, a thrill ran through the entire socialist world and henceforth dissent was heresy. The proletariat was literally stampeded toward revolution. The unorganized workers hastened to organize. The Socialist Party began to occupy a position never before reached, of actual leadership of the Italian masses. There was some dissent, but from this time on it was to Moscow that the Italians looked for guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Giulio Pugliese, *Il Bolshevismo in Italia*, Bemporad, Florence.

With inexpressible scorn they repulsed an invitation to participate in the reconstruction of the old Second International, composed of traitors and "social patriots"—to call an Italian socialist a patriot was a bitter insult—and proclaimed their unwillingness to associate with the unregenerate comrades who had aided in carrying on the war. With the light of the rising sun in their eyes they could hardly look back; for in January, 1919, *Isvestia*, the organ of new Russia, had published an invitation to come and aid in the formation of the society that was to realize world-wide communism. The First International (1864-1876) had pointed the way; the Second International (1889-1914) had organized the European proletariat; the Third International would actuate socialism. It was all so simple. . . .

Passport difficulties prevented the Italians from reaching Moscow for the Congress (March) but they were present in the spirit and joyfully they accepted as their gospel the doctrines of Nikolai Lenin and the theses of the Third International. For perhaps the first time, the revolutionary free thinkers realized the joy of participation in a universal "church" and the limitless pride of those who possess the only truth.

### THE RUSSIAN GOSPEL

Fundamentally, Lenin is no more revolutionary than Karl Marx, from whom he derives his mystic materialism. Marxists have always believed that the time will come when the class-conscious workers will take over the government, by violence if neces-

sary, and communize the means of economic production. There was nothing new in the conception of proletarian dictatorship or of "direct action." The workers have, however, been annoyingly slow in becoming class conscious. Here lay Lenin's quarrel with Marxism.

Lenin is in a hurry.

He suspects that the workers, if left to themselves in a middle class world, may never become class conscious at all, or that they may even be bought over to coöperate with the middle classes. At election time the masses have always voted for the classes. What chance have the ignorant workers against these educated and insidious middle classes, who control the schools and the means of publicity and propaganda? Deliberately they deform the minds of the workers with their false ideals of peace, plenty and patriotism.

It sounds pretty bad, when you come to think of it. Logically, the only remedy is the overthrow of the middle class by violence. But here's the rub: common sense insists that a middle class that controls the arsenals and at least a part of the army can more easily be out-voted than beaten in battle. And at this spot we see Lenin's real contribution to socialist thought in the form of an ingenious hypothesis. Certainly, he admits, the masses cannot permanently overthrow the middle class because they lack class consciousness. But there are times when the masses can be goaded to revolt; then they can temporarily destroy the existing order, and a group of communist leaders, hampered by no sentimental considerations, can take

control, disarm the middle classes, arm the workers, crush all opposition and raise themselves to the dictatorship—naturally in the name of the proletariat. Great discontent and suffering can produce “revolutionary periods” when the revolution can be accomplished.

The proletariat dictatorship will be temporary. It need only last a generation or so. “As the middle class resistance is broken, as the middle class is gradually expropriated and transformed into a band of workers, the dictatorship vanishes and the State dies, and with it the classes themselves.”

No compromise is possible. The immediate aims of communism are therefore three: (1) to enlighten the masses on the necessity for instituting a new form of proletarian democracy; (2) to institute committees (embryonic soviets) in factories and shops, among the farmers and within the army and navy; (3) to conquer a reliable communist majority in these councils.

Needless to say, the Italian Socialist Party adhered to the Third International and hastened to drink deep at the fount of Russian wisdom. The Congress of Bologna (October 1919) echoed Moscow in declaring that the Italian middle class is incapable of getting back on its feet and summoned the proletariat to a decisive action of revolution and conquest. A month later the metal workers in the radical city of Turin began an agitation to transform the existing organs into the desired factory committees. In the following April vast schemes for the creation of real soviets throughout all Italy were made. And although they remained on paper,

violence and revolt spread so rapidly that by the dog days it was the belief of multitudes of all classes that Italy was indeed about to fall victim to a desperate insurrection. What were the reasons for this belief?

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PREMISES

The war opened the eyes of all Italian workers. They had been schooled in the demo-humanitarian doctrines which, previous to 1914, had declared men too civilized to fight. The coming of war showed either that the European middle class had been unable to prevent it or that some of them had actually desired it. Considerable evidence pointed to the latter conclusion. For if the capitalists, "the men behind the governments," were as they stated, waging a defensive war for democracy, liberty and the rights of little nations, how could they so brazenly seek during this holy period to amass private wealth at the expense of the sorely tried commonwealths? It seemed unanswerable.

Italy's participation had been brought about by a turbulent minority. Conscription dragged the others from their homes and, for reasons which they did not understand or considered insufficient, set them to fight men whom they did not hate. The struggle lasted a long time; once—at Caporetto—the men tried to abbreviate it. But the method—that of simply throwing down their arms and quitting—proved too simple. Internationalism of that sort did not work.

Then they won a victory, the Austrian army melted away, the war was over.



But the middle class which had promised so much now said that Italy had been robbed by her Allies and that the victory, which had cost such sacrifices, was in short no victory at all! It was bewildering. The war must be a sell. The capitalists obviously cared nothing for the break-up of Austria-Hungary and the redemption of the brothers; they only cared for a free hand to plunder and when this was denied they declared the war a failure!

The peace treaties offended the elementary sentiment of equity present in almost every simple man. During the war the workers had demanded sweeping reforms in international relations and had threatened that the governments would soon have to choose between Wilson and Lenin. "By the middle of 1919 the labor masses throughout the world were manifestly disappointed and in a thoroughly bad temper . . . the common man felt that he had been cheated. There was to be no reconstruction but only a restoration of the old order—in the harsher form necessitated by the poverty of the new time."<sup>2</sup>

The Italian socialist and labor leaders, who had long been muzzled, took advantage of the return of freedom to damn everything connected with the struggle. Many of the middle class, including the ex-neutralists, joined in this cry and attributed all the existing evils to a fruitless war. The masses resolved to keep out of any more adventure; repeated hints of militarist conspiracies made them furious. D'Annunzio's occupation of Fiume clinched matters. Here was a bald-headed poet who had once claimed

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<sup>2</sup> H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*.



to be a socialist, leading the nation into possible war over Fiume, an insignificant town of unknown location for which most of the workers would not have wasted a yard of macaroni.

The Italian workers had long been drifting toward materialism. The war, profiteering and Marxian propaganda destroyed the remnant of their faith in spiritual values. Since their kingdom is only of this world they determined to enrich it by adequate material enjoyment. The workers who had stayed at home on the farms and in the munition factories had fared extremely well and raised their standards of living many times. These stay-at-homes contributed to the after-war ferment, an ideal—unlimited material prosperity; the returning soldiers taught that the way to reach it was through physical violence. The middle classes, they explained, were really not half so strong or so wise as they had pretended to be. Had they not botched the war? Had not the workers in the trenches and in the workshops played the decisive part?

The condition of the State was meanwhile going from bad to worse. The value of the *lira* steadily declined. Prices rose fantastically and in November, 1920, the cost of living was reckoned at eight times what it was in 1914. The old wage scale was absurd and union after union raised its demands, trying with desperation to keep pace with the standard reached during the war.

The national finances were in a grave condition. Under penalty of staring ruin some one in Italy had to revive and increase the national production. This meant harder work and longer hours; the workers

demanded less work and shorter hours. The government program demanded the curtailment of consumption and the restriction of luxuries. The workers demanded ever greater consumption and wider use of luxuries. The outcome appeared to be national bankruptcy.

What better field for revolution could be imagined?

While the bolsheviks planned what they would do when they came to power, the middle class financial measures seemed to be failing. The new taxes crippled industry without filling the national treasury. The capitalists like the workers refused to return to pre-war standards and since the industries could no longer return unlimited profits, the owners turned from production to speculation. Corruption seemed universal. In these circumstances the trade unions grew overbearing and began to impose themselves on the community by an interminable series of strikes, the peasants began to seize the large estates, the capitalists to tremble, and the Italian bolsheviks to believe that revolution was at hand.

### THE TRIUMPHS AND TYRANNY OF LABOR

“The social movement received from the war an almost giddy acceleration,” said Giovanni Giolitti to the Senate, repeating something known to every one. Immediately after the armistice began a mad struggle on the part of the workers to consolidate the economic position reached or promised during the war and prepare a political supremacy for the future. When (March 8, 1919) the right to assemble was restored, there followed an almost insane tem-

pest of violence and strikes. The lifting of the censorship (June 30) was the prelude to such a series of tragic riots that the censorship had to be restored.

A people compressed for four years with military vigor, naturally resents the fact. Some signs of irritation were normal and easily understood. But Italy after the armistice, presented the unusual spectacle of a victorious country trying by all means to obliterate its victory and abase the authors thereof. The war was wrapped in silence or smothered in vituperation. Deserters were raised to the rank of national heroes, praised by parading throngs; Prime Minister Nitti speedily granted them amnesty. The honor of electing to Parliament one of their number, Misiano, was disputed by Naples and Turin. All persons known to have favored Italy's intervention were accused of militarism and liable to be mobbed. The socialist deputy Treves (in private life a corporation lawyer) publicly invited a large crowd (April 15, 1919) "to sweep the streets of Milan of interventionist filth."

This was the logical prelude to an open attack on the Army, especially the professional part of it. Generals were held up to public odium, officers disarmed, beaten, spat upon, thrown into rivers; soldiers with arms surrounded, stripped and sometimes stabbed. Demobilized men with a grudge to pay lay in ambush for their former superiors or took vicarious vengeance on other officers. At Ancona a colonel's house was burned to the ground. To wear the national uniform became a disgrace and a danger. Nationality was under a ban; the Italian

flag was dragged in the dust and stamped upon. At Bologna, on the anniversary of the Italian armistice, (November 4, 1919) the national flag was hauled down from the town hall and a red banner raised in its place.

The national police incurred an equal hatred. At Milan (March 23, 1920) a plain clothes man discovered at a labor meeting was killed outright.

The members of the newly created Royal Guards became the symbols of popular insurrection. Every man's hand was against them. They were stoned, or made the subject of vulgar insults; sometimes they were killed. At Trieste a band of women danced around the slain body of a Royal Guard. The railroad men stood by the socialists and anarchists and absolutely refused to transport regimental flags, officers in uniform or police. Sometimes an express train waited hours in a country station until a general or a policeman decided to get off, and go on his way by some other means. Associations of ex-soldiers and patriotic organizations were prevented from public manifestation.

Political intolerance, though less than has been stated, was present in many places. Before the 1919 elections patriotic orators in the red towns were compelled to be silent or cry "Long live socialism." Dissenting types of socialist were particularly marked out for persecution. There must be no dissent in the red ranks. Those leaders were the most popular who went the farthest in encouraging violence and promising the coming revolution.

But social intolerance and general violence had no limits. In some districts it became dangerous to

wear a monocle or ride in an automobile. Thenceforth all men were to be equal—all *signori*. Meanwhile anarchy, arrogance and violence were the prerogatives of labor. A dispute between a street car conductor and a passenger was answered by a 24-hour general strike. A foot ball game at Viareggio was the prologue to a two-day battle with fire arms. Storekeepers accused (rightfully) of profiteering had their stores plundered. In several localities villas were sacked by armed mobs. General strikes isolated town after town, telephone and telegraph wires were constantly being cut. Registered letters went astray. Packages and freight were subject to the most impudent robbery. Trains ran hours behind time or not at all, according to the whim of the engineers. The garbage men in Rome struck twice in hot weather and for days the none too clean city stank with refuse; a terrible epidemic might easily have resulted. Anarchists freely tossed bombs and hand grenades about. Life became a sinister carnival. Each category of worker became a law unto itself. All authority had disappeared. Slight quarrels regularly ended in murder.

✓ At the same time the rebellious workers insatiably demanded higher wages. The government and the owners yielded, yielded. Labor—insolent, anti-patriotic, violent—was giving the country a foretaste of the coming revolution.

Some undoubted good came with so much evil. Nearly all categories of workmen won the right to an 8-hour day. The early months of 1920 saw much workmen's legislation come into force. Also the triumph of the postal telegraph and telephone



employees, who won to a privileged position in economic life; the triumph of the State Railway employees, who imitated the *postelegrafonici*; the consolidation of the Federation of the Toilers of the Sea, a seaman's organization which succeeded in forcing all officers to become members. Its leader, Captain Giulietti, defied the State; pirated away ships in favor of D'Annunzio, or stopped them in Italian ports if they happened to fly the flag of the ex-czars; founded a coöperative society with a capital of many millions; flirted with the anarchist Malatesta; and quarreled violently with the official socialists.

The General Confederation of Labor grew to include more than two million members. The Confederation was the open ally of the Socialist Party. GCL  
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The Parliamentary elections of November, 1919, the first in six years, were conducted on the basis of proportional representation. The socialists entered the struggle on a ticket frankly revolutionary. The catholics, who had formed the new center "Popular" party, flattered the socialists by copying their methods. Between the two militant organizations, the old fashioned "liberal" parties without fixed principles, were badly beaten. Of the 508 deputies elected, a fifth were catholics, and 158 were socialists. If they combined, the two parties could control the Chamber; whoever wished to govern had to have the support of one of them. The catholics too were committed to sweeping reforms. One of the first acts of the new chamber was therefore to pass a motion of Deputy Reina (Dec. 13, 1919) which favored the donation of uncultivated or badly culti-



vated lands to the peasants and the institution of trade union supervision in the factories. It is hardly likely that the deputies who voted the motion took it seriously. But they were reckoning without the peasants and the workmen. Trade union supervision of industry had to wait for nearly a year, but the donation of the land was immediately confirmed by two Royal Decrees (Falcioni and Visocchi).

## THE FARM LABORERS TAKE THE LAND

Italy is primarily a country of farmers or peasants. Most of them are landless. But conditions in the North and South are fundamentally different. In the South the socialists to some extent encouraged the catholics and combatants who were working for the extension of peasant proprietorship. In Sicily the condition of the farm laborers was pitiful. The landlords, who live in Palermo or the lesser cities, cede the land for a fixed rate to an intermediary, the *gabellotto*. The *gabellotto* relets the ground in small lots to the peasants, or more often, to lesser *gabellotti*. Eventually the land is rented to the actual farmers at exorbitant rates. If the farmer lacks the necessary funds he borrows from his *gabellotto*, who sometimes condescends to advance him something at from thirty to fifty per cent annual interest. The ultimate dream of the Southern Italian peasant is therefore to own the land he cultivates.

The soldiers returned to their villages with more information and less patience than when they left. Catholics and socialists were already in the field

and the newly arrived ex-soldiers formed a "Combatant" Party. The catholics made the first move in the direction of the Reina motion and at San Giuseppe Joto and San Cipirrello invaded some near-by feudal estates. The ex-soldiers and the socialists could not afford to let the catholics get ahead of them and in turn they occupied near-by lands and the movement so started spread so rapidly that in a single year one-third of the Island of Sicily had been taken by the peasants.

There was no real radicalism behind this move. It was simply a protest against an intolerable system of land tenure. The farmers did not ask possession of the lands they had taken. Generally they only demanded the elimination of the *gabellotto* and direct dealing with the landlord. And in many cases where the lands were really cultivated under intolerable conditions, the government consented.

In Northern Italy such invasions have been fewer and all have been made in the face of socialist opposition. For while catholics and ex-soldiers desired to increase the number of small farmers and "half produce" tenants, the socialists endeavored to reduce all the farm laborers to the condition of hired hands. These they organized into "red leagues" and by this means eventually obtained the monopoly of labor. With this in their hands they easily acquired absolute political mastery.

By the autumn of 1920 proletariat dictatorship in the agricultural districts of the Lower Po had become a fact. Typical was the province of Ferrara. Here the land was in the hands of a few hundred, mostly absentee proprietors. The elections of 1919

gave the socialists three of the four deputies. The municipal elections of the following year gave them all of the 21 communes and the majority of the Provincial Council. The harvest time strike of 1920 forced the owners to hire all labor through the red employment bureau, who demanded equality of salary for all hands, bad and good. The socialists had conquered the province. They ruled it with a rod of iron by means of the fine and the boycott.

Two hundred red leagues administered the conquered province. The proprietors had to hire the number of laborers allotted to them and had no choice of persons. They were strictly forbidden to do anything themselves. Produce could not be transported in the wagons of the proprietors; they had to be carried by the carters' union. And when the proprietors, worn out by a hopeless struggle, tried to sell out to small peasants, these latter were tormented and their lives made unbearable. "Half produce" tenants also received their share of persecution. During the big strike, scabs were kidnaped and obliged to join the leagues, proprietors were in a few cases attacked, hay stacks burned, vines cut level with the ground; farm animals died of hunger and thirst because none dared to care for them, and the harvest was reduced to a third of what it had been the preceding year. The agricultural leagues, in complete harmony with all the other workers—masons, carpenters, shoemakers, etc.—ruled in the exclusive interests of the working class, all of whom it had reduced to the same level. This was called a socialist conscience.

Each league was a law unto itself, not hesitating to violate the contract with the proprietors made by the central organization. The *capolega* or head of the league became the village tyrant. Red guards existed in a few places. But the irresistible weapon was the boycott. The league tribunals met and passed sentence; the life of the condemned man became from that day a torture. Isolated, with none to speak to him, living in an atmosphere that proclaimed his guilt, he soon found material conditions as impossible as moral tranquillity. The boycotted individual might not work outside his own land and there none would help him. He might not enter an inn or buy a drink. The storekeepers, from fear, refused to sell him anything, the cobbler to mend his shoes, the blacksmith to shoe his horses, the barber to shave his face. His children were hounded from school, the village doctor might be "unable to find time" to visit his sick wife. He could not move to another village for on all sides there were other red leagues and he was a marked man—anathema, taboo, excommunicate. Boycotted persons with their families were known to wander hundred of miles in search of work and even shelter. Sooner or later the victim submitted and asked for peace. Again the red league met and passed sentence: the offender must pay the league so many hundred or thousands of *lire* (according to the gravity of his offense), asking no questions, making no remonstrances, obtaining no receipt for the sum paid. Such a red tyranny was unknown in the world outside of Russia. The agricultural masses of North Italy, so organized and so governed, were one

of the strongest factors in the socialist victories. But their basis was unsound; the organizers had created a belief in revolution which events did not justify, and a vast army of apparently submissive but inwardly rebellious individuals who awaited only the first opportunity to turn against their "comrades."

### FOR THE FACTORY COMMITTEE

The factory committee was, according to the Third International, the "historical realization of pre-revolutionary proletarian institutions." And as such the Italian workers thought it must be worth getting.

The committee in each factory or forge or mill was to become a real workers' board of directors—and eventually take over the establishment. In time it would become a real soviet. The trade unions at the same time were to be broadened into industrial unions and become superior soviets, to which each single establishment would send delegates.

The Italian workers, who economically had gone about as far as they could, were easily persuaded that the time had come to make a political effort to change the structure of society. Even the Confederation of Labor, though conservative, was willing to go as far as the factory committee if this could be realized without too great jeopardy of present prosperity. The year 1920 was one long campaign by labor against the sacred principle of private ownership.

The first skirmish occurred in March in two of the cotton mills of Mazzonis Brothers near Turin.



Other employers had reached an agreement with the workers' organizations and a truce reigned. But the Mazzonis, heroes of the true Gary stamp, refused to accept these conditions and a strike followed. The Mazzonis answered they would rather go out of business than yield a hair, and shut down the mills. The labor organizations submitted the case to an arbitration commission at Turin. The Mazzonis refused to appear and the commission decided in favor of the workers. Its decision carried only advisory weight, but the Prefect of the Province, acting doubtless under instructions from the Prime Minister, Signor Nitti, promptly enjoined the brothers to accept the commission's decision. They did not budge. Then the workers lost patience, and—took violent possession of the mills, organized a factory committee and proceeded to carry on business. Mazzonis Brothers finally submitted and recovered possession of their property, but a precedent had been established.

A few days later another struggle occurred in the Turin metal industries. For years there had been friction here but the creation of Internal Commissions of workers, whose powers were rigorously defined by agreement between the Italian Federation of Metal Workers (F. I. O. M.) and the Owners' Association (A. M. M. A.), had improved matters. Now both sides were spoiling for a fight. The men, always turbulent and insolent with success, slacked in their work. The owners, fearing they had already yielded too much, were eager for an opportunity to recover their lost ground.

On March 26 the Internal Commission in a Fiat



plant in Turin turned the factory clock back to the solar hour, as the legal time in force reminded them too strongly of war time! This act became a test of its authority. The workers struck, the owners answered with a lockout. The men were determined that the internal commissions should develop into factory committees, the owners as strongly opposed. Both sides stood pat. The movement spread. The chief line of communication between France and Italy was cut at Turin and just at this time the Supreme Council of the Allies was meeting at San Remo. The government refused to interfere. Had the strike spread it might have provoked a general insurrection. But the Confederation of Labor was hostile and the strike failed. The men returned to work with some of the fight taken out of them.

Factory committees seemed more remote than a year before. Somehow the strategy of General Lenin did not seem to work in Italy. Either the labor movement in Italy was immature or Lenin was wrong. The second thought seemed sheer blasphemy, but the prestige of the Italian leaders was decreasing and they needed advice. The need for guidance happened to coincide with the meeting of the Third International at Moscow. A deputation of Italians soon after set out to throw themselves at the feet of the Moscow wizard.

An anarchist revolt in June at Ancona prevented a few soldiers from leaving for Albania, but, as a revolution, failed miserably. A battalion of tried troops mutinied, to be sure, barricades were erected, a fort was stormed, houses burned, many persons

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killed. But such matters adjust themselves automatically in Italy and in a few days the movement was dead. The anarchist revolt brought the factory committees no nearer.

### THE GREAT LOCK-IN

The Italian metal workers' lock-in seemed to mark a change in the fundamental relation between capital and labor and lead directly to trade union supervision of industry.

In May, 1920, the famous F. I. O. M. advanced a claim for a raise in wages. The request was not exorbitant but the industrial owners saw in it the opportunity for which they had been waiting to break the back of the labor organizations. They therefore alleged pretext after pretext for putting off a decision and finally (July 29) answered they could not grant a *centesimo* more in wages, as the precarious situation of the industry rendered an increase in expenses impossible.

The owners expected an immediate strike. The labor organizers, who had considered the ground and only accepted battle on their own terms, proclaimed "obstructionism." In a speech to the Milan workers (August 9), their cleverest leader, Bruno Buozzi, outlined obstructionism:

Let production be reduced to a minimum.

No one shall leave his place and shall always be found busy lest a pretext be given for dismissals or lock-outs.

No worker shall consent to use files or tools not made for his specific task and that are not in perfect condition.

Take as much time as possible for the repairing or installing of all machines, belts, gears, etc.

No piece of work outside the regular task is to be done for any motive whatsoever.

He even went further:

We do not intend to tolerate a lock-out. Should any company proclaim a lock-out, the workers must enter the shops at any cost, even by breaking down the gates, and carry on the work for themselves.

It was a warning, but the workers were deaf and perhaps counted on the armed support of the Government. A small increase in wages would still have preserved the peace, but the owners, after twenty days, met obstructionism with a lockout. Dawn of — the 30th saw the foundry of N. Romeo and Co., closed and guarded by military police, while all about it other shops remained open. That night when the whistles blew in the other shops, the owners left but the men remained behind.

In every foundry, forge and workshop in Milan they bolted the doors, fortified the walls and, arming themselves with arms found in the establishments, awaited possible attack by the police or the army. In the next few days the movement spread as far south as Naples and in all, the lock-in was declared in six hundred plants. Almost everywhere the proprietors, managers and highly salaried employees left the shops quietly. In a few instances they were roughly handled, in one or two cases forcibly detained for a day or two.

Immediately a howl went up from owners all over the country: let the metal workers be thrown out by force! Had this been attempted the result might have been bloody, for the rebels numbered

over 500,000. But despite the appeals to save the country from anarchy and protect the principle of private property, the Prime Minister, absent from the country at Aix-les-Bains, sent answer that there was no danger and that the men were not to be disturbed. "What do you want me to do?" he is said to have asked of a furious owner. And when the man stated that the duty of the Prime Minister was to enforce the law even though it entail the bombardment of the factories, Giolitti dryly answered: "Very well, I shall begin with yours." And the owner decided he too was for tolerance.

The conflict dragged on, while the world wondered. The first act of the men bivouacked in the forges was to provide store of food and bedding for themselves; whole caravans of wives and children laden with the most varied objects presented themselves at the factories and left their loads. The next thought was for defense. It was easy for ex-munition workers to improvise hand grenades and the arms found in the plants were more than sufficient to sustain a siege. Electric wires highly charged were strung across vulnerable spots, the factories were interconnected with private telephones. Red guards were organized and a regular system of patrols watched on the roofs where, in some cases, machine guns were also placed. Work continued, as I was personally able to attest, with the greatest calm. Discipline was generally good and the men were stirred by the desire to show their self-control. In Milan a person speaking with no one and reading no newspapers might have gone about his business

during the days of the lock-in without being aware of it.

The blot on the picture was at Turin where as usual the workers plunged into violence. Battles with revolvers occurred between owners and men and there were some deaths. A "red court" composed of youths and women condemned a private guard and a nationalist and they were brutally murdered.

Such a situation was necessarily short-lived. To the men in or out of the shops, industrial war meant no pay. The other unions did what they could to help and the coöperative banks, so strong in Northern Italy, gave large funds and credit; but the money taken in for goods sold was small and the sums found in the company safes were insignificant compared with the weekly payrolls. Five hundred thousand men with their families had large needs and, when the owners announced that no wages would be paid for work done during the lock-in, nearly all production stopped. After a week the men began to grow anxious; desperation was not distant. It became evident that matters were working toward a crisis which might involve the entire country.

Control of the movement had to some extent passed from the exclusive hands of the Metal Workers' Union into those of the General Confederation of Labor. The owners were still confident of winning and intended to hold out, especially as the specter of factory committees had again been raised.

The communists found in the owners' intransigence matter for complete satisfaction. Let the revolt be broadened to cover all industry, they

urged, and revolution becomes inevitable. Already the lock-in movement had begun to spread. At Turin several rubber factories were occupied by armed workers, the Pirelli Rubber Works at Milan were occupied, and a cotton mill or two. The choice was between a vast attempt to seize all industry and immediate restriction of the movement leading to peaceful settlement.

The question of revolution was at stake.

Finally (September 10) the representatives of the great trade unions, the directorate of the Socialist Party and the Socialist Parliamentary Group of Deputies, the principal agitators and personalities of the labor movement, representing most of Italy's organized industrial labor, met to decide between an attempt at revolution and compromise. After almost 36 hours of continual session the delegates voted. The metal workers abstained on the ground that they would consider the matter independently but every one realized that their decision depended on that of the Confederation, alone capable of leading so vast a move. Over a million votes were cast and the motion for peace (presented by D'Aragona, the bearded leader of the Confederation) prevailed by 592,245 votes to 409,569. Bolshevism in Italy received its decisive setback.

Never had the stage seemed so set for violence. Though outwardly the owners talked defiance, inwardly they quaked for their wealth and had made preparations for leaving the country. Public opinion was not unfavorable toward the men. The fidelity of the army was questionable; it seemed improbable that the young conscripts who entered the



barracks singing the "Red Flag" could ever be persuaded to take arms against workingmen. The middle class was reacting feebly, the government seemed flaccid or indifferent. Despite all this the workers voted to negotiate. It was a momentous decision.

Public opinion was so relieved that Prime Minister Giolitti saw his opportunity and announced to the employers that if they did not soon give in, he himself would solve the problem. Shortly afterward, to the intense indignation of most of the owners, but doubtless in agreement with a few, he announced that on the basis of the Reina motion he intended to issue a decree establishing trade union supervision of industry—the right, that is, of the workers in every industrial establishment to participate in its affairs.

Ten days later the battle was over, the metal workers had accepted a small raise in wages and the evacuation of the factories began. Giolitti's decision was a deliberate move toward splitting the Socialist Party. For in the opinion of the extreme communists the Confederation of Labor had "betrayed the revolution." The sober fact is that the Italian workers felt themselves far too prosperous to risk a struggle.

### PLANS FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

By the summer of 1920 the inner council of the Communist International at Moscow had decided that "all the postulates for world revolution exist,"<sup>3</sup> and set about mobilizing the red forces for the

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<sup>3</sup> See Zinovieff's speech at Halle, October 14, 1920.

decisive onslaught on capital. Thenceforth there was no room for discussing or logic chopping. The truth had been found and must be put into operation. Loyalty in the ranks became therefore more important than numbers. In each country a "Communist Party, Section of the Third Communist International," was to be "formed on the principle of absolute centralization and iron discipline." The Parties so formed were to group the red combatants. They were to be the apostles of revolution, blindly obedient to the Word of Moscow, ready for prison and martyrdom, a class apart, a company of sworn servants.

"The end justifies the means." It is in this light that we must judge the alliance between communism and the anti-British nations, the acceptance of peasant proprietorship, the different treatment of the various socialist and labor groups, the appeal to suppressed peoples and to Asia.<sup>4</sup>

The immediate task of the communists should be to cast out and discredit the Reformists—all who will not work for immediate revolution or submit to Moscow. To communists all weapons are legitimate. Let them use craft and calumny. Let them slip in everywhere, pervading the labor groups, softly persuading, loudly championing the miserable and the humble, letting it appear that the vile middle class is deliberately provoking the "economic crisis, while the proletariat is struggling for the organization of production, for the suppression of speculation, disorganization and high prices."<sup>5</sup> Commun-

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Thesis adopted by Second Congress of Third International, Moscow, August, 1920.

ist agitators can afford to despise the “*bourgeois cult of truth.*”

While outwardly preaching production, communists should undertake subtle sabotage. Nor need they think too much about the opinions of the workers; “a Communist Member (of Parliament) is answerable not to the scattered mass of his constituents, but to his own Communist Party,”<sup>6</sup> which judges his work in relation to the furthering of its own recondite aims.

Communists must be tireless; nothing could be more dangerous than the belief that there is no way out of the post-war situation but revolution. “There never is a situation without a way out.”<sup>7</sup> The middle class is very ill but might still revive. Communists must see to it that it does not revive.

The all-important task was thus the creation of a resolute yet obedient Communist Party in each country, which had purged itself of reformists and “social democrats.” Good Communists could prove their loyalty to the Third International by unconditional compliance in word and deed with the famous 21 points.

The substance of these is, roughly, as follows:

The political parties that desire to enter the Third Communist International, must accept name, organization, program, aims and tactics from this body. They must call themselves communist, not socialist and must exclude from their ranks all “social patriots,” “social pacifists” and reformists. They must work for world revolution, combat

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Lenin's opening speech at the Second Congress of the Third International.

imperialism, aid Soviet Russia. They must call a conference and declare themselves within four months. To all intents and purposes they must forfeit their liberty of action for military law dictated by the central Executive Committee.

The establishment of this body of dogma and tactics was the chief work of the Second Congress of the Third Communist International, which met at Moscow in August, 1920. Unfortunately for bolshevism in Italy, the Italians were this time represented at the Congress and had a chance to study Russia at first hand.

### LENIN SPLITS THE ITALIAN PARTY

Giacinto Menotti Serrati, editor of the four editions of the *Avanti!*, went to Moscow to see if an Italian revolution was possible. The impression brought back from Moscow by the Italian delegates was simply disastrous. Soviet Russia was a land of "hunger, pestilence, and the gallows." If revolution meant reducing one's country to the state of Russia, the Italian socialists would get along without revolution. Worse, the situation created by Lenin, however it might impress one, clearly could not be called socialism.

The Italian delegation was large. It included representatives of the Coöperative Companies, the General Confederation of Labor, the Socialist Party Directorate and the Parliamentary Group. In his report to the Russians, Serrati painted the position of Italian socialism in a brilliant palette. He told of growth in number, of the economic victories, of

the 158 Deputies in the Chamber. "The Italian middle class," Serrati said, "is struggling in mediocrity, an evident sign of its decadence."

But these triumphs left Lenin cold. Why had not Serrati made a revolution? Why had the chief organ of communion ceased to be the *Avanti!* and become the *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order) of Turin, a newspaper which openly accused the socialist leaders of being retrograde and lukewarm toward the Third International?

Serrati naturally replied that the Italian masses desired not so much revolution as good wages and great power; that the "revolutionary masses" which bulked so big in the eyes of Lenin were violent because they were rowdy ex-soldiers new to socialist discipline and not because they were convinced communists. The Italians would accept the 21 conditions for confirmation in the Third Communist International, but they preferred to remain masters of the manner and moment in which the conditions should be applied. The Italian Right was more radical than the French Left. To expel immediately from their ranks such Reformists as Turati and Modigliani (specially declared anathema by the Third International), who had given thirty years of service to socialism, would mean to split the Party. Why bother so long as these veterans proved faithful in deed to the Party discipline? On the same principle the entire French group who had supported the war should be expelled.

No agreement could be reached over this point with the Russians. The Italians returned to their

own country for the most part hostile to the attempt of the Third International to reduce membership to vassalage.

From this moment Lenin and the Third International deliberately worked for a break. Better one faithful henchman than ten insubordinate "sympathizers." Russia needed tools, not sympathy. When the Russians heard how the leaders of the Confederation had damped down the lock-in movement and prevented social strife, they declared open war on a large section of the Italian Party, whom they determined to get rid of at any cost. Almost immediately they began to bombard the Italian working class with manifestos, full of the most extravagant analysis of the Italian situation. "The Italian working class is wonderfully unanimous. The Italian proletariat is all for revolution. The larger part of the peasants is all for revolution. . . . Italy presents to-day all the essential conditions to guarantee the victory of a great proletarian revolution."

Important, doubtless, if true; but they were not true. News from Russia had cooled Italian ardor for revolt. The workers realized that: (1) revolution would have no very great chance of success; (2) that if unsuccessful it would be the occasion for a reaction in which all those material benefits so painfully won would be lost; (3) that if successful it would plunge the country into misery worse than that of Russia and in all probability into international war.

"The war," said Zinovieff with great frankness, "has brought socialism twenty years in advance,



but in a form full of pain, in a form in which every workingman must really go hungry, must suffer and travel a long stage of civil war."

The Italians, after hearing about Russia, preferred to wait for socialism the fifty or hundred years prophesied by Giolitti—and in the meantime remain prosperous. The essential weakness of Lenin's doctrine was that it asked the workers slowly to destroy the system by which they must in the meantime live. Without question, the visit to Russia of the Italian delegation gave a severe blow to bolshevism. Hardly a soul in Italy continued to believe in the advisability of immediate revolution.

The influence of Lenin remained none the less enormous. He had done more than any leader of the people had ever accomplished. His word was still gospel to some thousands of Italians and many more pretended to follow him. Confident of his power he publicly accused Serrati and the other leaders of betraying the revolution and "the inexorable will of Moscow" and demanded the immediate division of the Party.

But this was too absurd. Serrati, menaced with excommunication, replied that Lenin was misinformed. Instead of a proletarian revolution a capitalist reaction was to be expected and had indeed already begun. To split the forces of the Party in Italy would be a grave mistake. Serrati refused to accept the challenge of the Third International—"who is not with us is against us,"—and answered that the Italians would submit to the 21 points only if applied with fairness to all

countries alike. Lenin's tactics were unpleasantly opportunist: he welcomed the French "social patriots" who had upheld the war, and Gregory Zinovieff, who had betrayed the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, only to excommunicate the Italians who had never once apostatized!

The pontifical manner of the Russians, which recalled a discipline from which the Italians had broken away, the lack of respect for Italian national feeling, lessened the influence of the Third International. Lenin made the mistake of Wilson before him in underestimating this feeling.

Lenin found an unexpected opponent in Prime Minister Giolitti. Few men have served the liberal Italian monarchy like this shrewd, masterful, cynical old man, who during nearly thirty years, despite scandal and corruption, has labored to tame the extremist parties, both right and left, and tie them to the chariot of the State.

Giolitti's tactics at this juncture, as Serrati had foreseen, consisted in weakening the socialists by suffocating the extreme left in violence and flattering the extreme right by appearance of reform. He too desired to split the Party but in such a way that the communists would be isolated. The verbal acceptance of trade union supervision by the Government had a great effect, seeming to justify the Prime Minister's boast that within the limits of the Italian constitution all reforms could be peacefully realized. So the Prime Minister continued for a time to support the agricultural coöperative societies around Bologna, ceded State-owned ships to the Federation of Toilers of the Sea, opposed capitalist con-

centration, laid heavy taxes on past war profits, withdrew the Italian troops from Valona, made friends with the Yugoslavs and healed the Adriatic sore, promised a constitutional amendment transferring the war and treaty making powers from the crown to the parliament, and in general complied with the political ideals of the democratic, conservative labor element. The workers were prosperous and everything seemed to support the reformist theory that revolution is identical with evolution. Violent revolution at least was a dead letter.

At the Seventeenth National Congress of the Italian Socialist Party, Giolitti prevailed over Lenin. The center group with the disillusioned Serrati dominated the voting and the pure communists under Bombacci and Graziadei seceded, formed a communist party that received immediate investiture at the hands of Lenin's personal representative, the Bulgar, Kabakcheff, and took with them not over a fourth of the old party members. Kabakcheff's "excommunication" in the name of Lenin was greeted with derisive cries of "*Habemus pontificem*"—at last we have a Pope—this being the phrase with which the election of each successor of Peter is announced to the Roman people.

At the beginning of March 1921 the triennial congress of the mighty Confederation of Labor voted to follow the socialists against the communists and while refusing to reënter the Labor International of Amsterdam—stained by the participation of its members in the war—made its adherence to Lenin's International conditional on the (most improbable) adherence of the Italian Socialist Party.

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The world-wide crisis of business and industrial deflation was now lowering blackly over Italy. The leaders of the Confederation realized thoroughly that a period of unemployment was not far distant, that the weak industrial structure would be severely tried and that to "sabotage production" as the extremists desired, was to court famine. In such a crisis owners and men would have to stand together in an effort to extort from the tax payers subsidies which would enable both to retain some part of their former prosperity. The masses would in the meantime be kept quiet by the conquest of "trade union supervision"—"the Confederation of Labor is demolishing the middle classes," said the organizer Buoizzi—and the battle with the communists had been won.

Italy meanwhile and still unknown to the majority of Italians had entered on a new phase of reaction and factional anarchy. Not one of Giolitti's promises was realized by him. Echoes of *the revolution that never was* died away in the distance amid the growing rumblings of a new kind of war.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE REACTION THAT FAILED

A *fascio* is a bunch or bundle. When applied to persons the word can best be translated as a band or gang. There have been *fasci* in Italy, especially in Sicily, before now. The miscellaneous interventionist groups of 1915 were called *fasci*. A number of deputies who, after Caporetto, banded together for the vigorous prosecution of hostilities, took the name of *fascio*. After the war, therefore, when many ex-soldiers organized in little groups, what more logical than that they too should call their organizations fighting bands (*fasci di combattimento*) and themselves collectively *fascisti* or bandsmen. So much for the name.

But the substance is new and strange. The *fascisti* have fulfilled a rôle unique in recent Italian history. Similar in spirit to the more intolerant elements of the American Legion, not unlike in their methods to the ancient and revived Ku Klux Klan, they have outdone both. For though animated to some extent by unselfish motives, they have nevertheless served as the instrument for a vast attempt at capitalist reaction, become the weapon for electoral fraud on a scale hitherto unknown even in Italy, and spread terror and hatred throughout half the peninsula. None the less the reaction that they sought to actuate failed simply because it was

directed against a revolutionary plan that had been abandoned by all but the most visionary of its adherents.

Largely viewed, the *fascisti* movement is merely a phase of the world-wide reaction which successful war made inevitable and which was delayed in Italy owing to the anti-militarism, indolence, skepticism and individualism of the Italians themselves. But in its formal aspects the *fascisti* movement demands explanation.

Italy is still the classic land of the faction and the brawl, the swift murder and the lasting *vendetta*. No public manifestation, it would seem, no assembly or election can be held without a fight. As often as not there are persons killed. Such belligerent tactics have, since the war, been introduced even into the Chamber of Deputies, where the members pummel one another publicly to the music of hoarsely vociferated vituperation, then go outside and make it up. But the war did not give birth to this violence in action: it merely revived a state of mind apparent in most of the history of Italy. The medieval Roman families, Colonna, Savelli, Orsini; the Guelphs and the Ghibellines; the White Guelphs and the Black—they were merely the communists and the *fascisti* of another epoch. The Italians have rarely made national war, but factional, communal, personal war has been their pastime and their delight. In the *fascisti* of to-day something of the communal spirit is still present.

Italy and the Italian government are almost always under the open or veiled control of a violent or corruptive faction—a “resolute minority,” the



Italians call it. Such a minority forced Italy into the war against the apathy of the majority; such a minority insisted on carrying the Fiume episode to the end; such a minority led the labor classes to the brink of revolution. In a country most of which is still habitually passive and which considers the central authority a kind of cruel stepfather to be cajoled, swindled and thwarted, government by faction is inevitable. Usually, to be sure, such government has been peaceful, and as often as not, occluded from the vulgar eye. But occasionally it becomes violent. In case of clash between two such factions, the real Government sits tight and waits until the stronger prevails, then enters the arena on the side of the winner. Such tactics are not so entirely opportunist as they seem. For to prevail a faction must possess at least the temporary sympathy of that small public opinion which really counts. Communist fanatics at the head of the labor organizations were able to rule the country for nearly two years because public opinion preferred them to the alternative government by the Army and strong secretive men. When the communists failed to keep their promises, when the bubble of Russian utopia had been pricked, the *fascisti* rose from the womb of the middle class and imposed their will in the name of the law, and order and capital. The common man was tired of communist violence and arbitrary rule by manual laborers. The *fascisti* promised something else—so *evviva i fascisti*—for the time being.

ITALY, IN JANUARY, 1921

By January, 1921, a month before the annual  
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congress, the Italian socialists were divided and in full retreat. The communists had lost caste. The saner leaders had visited Russia and pronounced the revolution there a failure—certainly nothing to be imitated in Italy. The labor organizations were all for defending the privileged economic position they had won. To push further claims would be futile in view of the black cloud of industrial crisis they could see sweeping across Europe. The masses, sick of revolutionary promises perpetually unrealized, had abandoned the fiery young communists and were looking again for guidance to their tried navigators, Serrati, Turati, Zibordi, Modigliani, who promised a longer voyage but a sure port. These politicians had shrewdly predicted that in Italy violence could only lead to counter violence, attempted revolution to reaction. But just at the moment the socialist brig was changing pilots and endeavoring to head up and trim sails, the gale of *fascism* struck and staggered it.

### THE SOIL OF FASCISM

The Government, following the time-honored custom, had submitted to the communists when they had seemed strong. Nitti had imposed heavy taxes, made a small levy on capital, and threatened a forced loan. Giolitti forced through measures for the registration of stocks and shares and the revision and confiscation of excessive war profits. Both had virtually recognized the right of the peasants to occupy the land and had greatly favored the labor coöperatives, which occupy a large place

in the national economy. Giolitti had moreover accepted in theory, the principle of trade union supervision of industry and had done nothing to check the extraordinary red tyranny in the agricultural basin of the Po, where communists, socialists, republicans and catholics vied with one another in their efforts to satisfy and win over the spoiled farm laborers.

The Italian manufacturers and profiteers were extremely reluctant to admit that the glorious period of easy fortunes—the *cuccagna* of war—had closed. At the first wind of danger they withdrew whatever capital they could from their swollen industries and put it in a safe place; and at the time of the factory lock-in, considered getting out altogether. The owners of the Fiat company offered to sell the entire industry to their employees. Several companies were running close to bankruptcy. In the succeeding months one of the largest companies, the Ilva, did practically fail in circumstances that recall those with which the American anti-trust laws had sought to deal. Past dividends, however elephantine, had been irrevocably disturbed. What the owners wanted was not vexatious financial measures and revision of war contracts, but ultra tariff protection and generous subsidies. Otherwise, they threatened, they would be forced to reduce or shut down the plants. Dare the Government permit several hundred thousand unruly workmen to be turned into the streets to riot?

To keep up the national spirit the profiteers—all those who had, for a consideration, made the munitions of victory—acquired the control of a fairly

large section of the press, which identified the interests of their owners with those of the nation. On principle these sheets favored an aggressive foreign policy. Some of the owners undoubtedly staked D'Annunzio. To the jazz of another war the dance of profits might well continue a year or two longer. When the first *fasci* proved themselves adequate to the task of disciplining labor, the industrial owners became generous with applause and stimulants.

The land owners in the North were fighting with their backs to the wall; either they must thrust back the red wave or yield their property altogether. When two or three episodes of barbaric violence (at Bologna and Ferrara) had aroused the horror of the entire country against the reds, the agrarians determined they would die fighting.

The theories of the *fascisti* were largely provided by the nationalists from their miscellaneous intellectual baggage. To the nationalists the State is god and they its true hierophants. Violence and biological struggle are natural to man and prevent him from becoming "vile." They discovered in the *fasci* that "pure" flame of patriotism which distinguishes the national elite from hypocritical demagogues. Naturally they favored high protection in order to preserve in Italian hands the manufacture of war material and other necessities "for the coming war." At Rome, where they were strongest, *fascism* meant essentially the keeping of the Adriatic question in a state of permanent fester.

The conservative cure for all the woes of after-war Italy was military dictatorship. In this capital-

ists, nationalists, D'Annunzians and the upper military circles agreed. Army chiefs, conservatives, nationalists and early *fascisti* undoubtedly plotted with the poet to enthrone a dictator and imagined that he would carry out an Italian revolution. At least two supposed plots gained public notice (in June 1919 and November 1920). The king was to go and a military dictatorship of Gabriele D'Annunzio and General Giardino would enthrone his cousin the Duke of Aosta.

Much smoke and no fire! The truth of these plots, whereof echoes and new versions continue to swell the small talk of drawing-rooms, has never been revealed. But they sufficiently showed the sincere feeling of a large part of the Army, smarting under allied and internal provocation, and progressively unwilling to tolerate insults to their patriotism. But excepting in one spot the hands of the Army were tied. Here—on the eastern frontier where the Fiume question kept large bodies of men mobilized—Army resentment was openly expressed.

The middle class in Venetia Julia and Istria was to a great extent Italian; the common people were almost solidly Slav. And these Slavs were openly hostile to their conquerors and everywhere came into immediate conflict with them. The Slavs had no intention of becoming good Italians if they could help it. Many of them, from conviction or expediency, made common cause with the anti-patriotic Italian communists. But these regions were held under military law and with a civil governor whose sympathies were with the Army. The exaspera-



tion of the military gentlemen emerged in a somewhat frantic yet entirely human effort to knock a sense of humility into the unruly Slav communists. If they could not be made good Italians they could at least be forced to listen to their conquerors' *vae victis*. In this quite un-Italian act of folly the Army was, in part at least, led by the "redeemed" Italians of the region, who sought formal revenge on their former persecutors.

Venetia Julia and Istria were treated like conquered provinces, which indeed they were. The majority of the population was certainly hostile to Italy. Hundreds of persons were therefore arrested for this hostility, defined as treason, and for spreading discontent and for imaginary plots. Worst of all, these prisoners were liable, if they happened to be communists, to beating and bad treatment. Police brutality—latent in every land—was allowed to emerge into daylight. Beyond these measures, which did not blot out the feeling of revolt among the Slavs or cause them to abjure their communist faith, men in uniform could not go. The spectacle of Italian soldiers and police openly burning centers of Slav feeling and labor headquarters would have caused echoes and more than echoes at Rome. A more efficient weapon was therefore found in the *fasci* of volunteers, and the *fascio* at Trieste became, we are told by an enthusiastic nationalist, a model for the other *fasci* soon to spread throughout the country. *Fascism* in Venetia Julia and Istria remained primarily a weapon for subduing the local Slavs and "learning them to be toads."



## THE THEORY OF FASCISM

In practice *fascism* proved to be "dynamically conservative," yet in theory it was and remained revolutionary. Its unquestioned founder, Benito Mussolini (born 1884), was formerly a red of the reds. His lieutenants were likewise rebels. Umberto Pasella and Agostino Lansillo had both been syndicalists; Michele Terzaghi was, like Mussolini, an ex-socialist. These men imparted a strong revolutionary spirit to the movement, which they proclaimed "republican in tendency." Temperamentally the early *fascisti* were similar to the advanced communists, equally opposed to liberalism, democracy and pacifism, equally ready for a fight, exalting heroic violence in opposition to the current "worship of the belly." From their syndicalist origin they also derived their chief doctrines, the cult of the "productive forces" and the shifting of center in the economic struggle from the field of distribution to that of production. By 1920 (though they did not yet come out as a political party) they had formulated a program of some clarity.

They aimed to defend the nation and the victory against foreign aggression and bolshevik violence. This done, their task was to stimulate production. The enemy was not socialism but the parasite, whether workman or capitalist. Whatever economic organization should prove best fitted to produce, that they would defend. They declared themselves favorable to the 8-hour day, all sorts of workman's insurance, coöperative management of public works and public utilities, a national council for production

(not unlike a soviet), a tax on capital and heredity, the confiscation of church property and excess war profits, the reduction of the State powers and the bureaucracy. In foreign policy they were "aggressive." Hence the support of the Fiume raid and the scheming for "republican dictatorship." Mussolini has written: "The interest of the nation is above that of single groups and classes, even above those of a single generation." The arbiters of the national interest should be chosen, not from decrepit and corrupt politicians, but from among young, daring, intuitive individuals with energy to govern, not afraid to use those violent methods the occasion might demand, but not necessarily pledged to lawlessness.

So instructed, the first *fasci di combattimento* remained practically inactive for nearly two years, their only accomplishments being the sacking of the offices of the Milan *Avanti!* and the support given D'Annunzio. Then, allied with the Army in Venetia Julia, and with Capital in Emilia, they began a real offensive on organized labor, recruited their numbers from among all ranks of Respectability and, ceasing to be militia, assumed the aspect and tactics of "vigilantes."

### THE FASCISTI AT WORK

"A-yah, a-yah, ah lah làh!" with the accent on the last ringing note. This was the cry that, with the *fascist* hymn and shouts of *A basso Lenin*, brought panic and confusion into the ranks of millions of Italian workers and peasants. It was accompanied by the thuds of blows, by a frantic and

sometimes mortal firing of revolvers, by the explosion of hand grenades, the rumble of heavy *camions*. It meant destruction, violence, usually death and the disappearance of the material signs of thirty years of slow socialist progress.

The first *fascisti*, largely youths with no knowledge of the doctrines of communism but instinctive hatred of labor rule, went about their work of destruction and danger to the shout of *Viva l'Italia!*

There had been provocation. Even the socialist *Avanti!* (August 20, 1921) admitted that the *fascisti* order sprang up against revolutionary disorder in defense of the State. What alarmed the thoughtful *fascisti* was the evidence of the communal elections of October, 1920, which showed that the socialist strength was not on the wane. Italy is divided administratively into provinces, each with a prefect at the head. The province is divided into communes, each of which includes not only a single town or village but the country round as far as the limits of the adjacent communes. Each commune elects a municipal council. When a municipal council becomes offensive to the Prefect he can suppress it and a royal commissary is appointed who administers it until the next election. In the municipal election of 1920 the socialists conquered practically the same percentage of the 8000 odd communes as they had of the 508 posts as deputy a year previously.

Many large centers, including Milan, Bologna and Leghorn, remained in their hands and they just missed taking political possession of Turin and Florence. Another year might see them in the

majority in all North Italy and, as the strongest organized party, openly controlling the country. A socialist government, however mild, was a greater bogey to the capitalists than any number of noisy communists in the street. And when, at the inauguration of the Bolognese municipal council, a panic stricken communist murdered a popular lawyer and war veteran in the council chamber,<sup>1</sup> the *fascio* of Bologna rose in violent rebellion.

Soldiers, students, professional men, officers, shopkeepers, all joined the *fascio*. Red leaders like Bucco and Zanardi, who had been the virtual dictators of the city, were beaten, forced to renege their opinions, and violently exiled from the city under threat of death. Small groups of *fascisti*, armed with various weapons and resolute decision, affronted the numerous but dismayed socialists and drove them headlong. The municipal council was forced to resign. *Fascisti* pulled down the red flag from the town hall and the socialist centers, tore up the portraits of Karl Marx and Lenin, and forbade labor meetings altogether. Finally, (January 24, 1921), they burned the local Chamber of Labor, the headquarters of the red movement.

“That night,” melodramatically writes Enrico Corradini, the nationalist leader, “I saw the fortress of the enemy, the Chamber of Labor, disappear in flames. Cheering citizens assisted at the spectacle while policemen, carbineers, guards and soldiers watched the flames devour the building with their arms at rest.”

The terrible reds proved incapable of violent

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<sup>1</sup> The slayer, a certain Galli, has been disavowed by the socialists.

resistance! The more recent communist leaders generally showed the most abject cowardice. They were, to be sure, attacked when in full retreat at a moment of strategic weakness. Nothing, however, can excuse the miserable ease with which many, under pain of threats or violence, signed declarations disowning their life's work and praising the *fasci*, or meekly resigned from those positions to which they had been lawfully elected. The older leaders watched the fulfillment of their predictions as to the results of violence with sad satisfaction, and counselled passivity. The unguided masses were helpless. In the first months the *fascisti* reigned supreme: fifty could control a large town, four "occupy" a village of two thousand hostile souls.

A few persons, such as the deputy, Maffi, manfully refused to submit; a few localities, strongholds of communists, catholics, or republicans, resisted successfully. But in a short time the large communist centers, Bologna, Ferrara, Rovigo, Reggio Emilia, Modena, were under the military rule of the *fascisti*. Communists who resisted were beaten or worse. *Fascist* sentinels patrolled the streets and "kept order." Public opinion applauded. The shopkeepers were delighted. The socialist administrations had governed openly in favor of the workers. At Reggio municipal pharmacies, bakeries, a mill, and the macaroni factory had practically suppressed private enterprise in the same trade.

The *fascisti* soon organized on strictly military lines. They had turns of guard duty, headquarters, secret emissaries, and equipped themselves for rapid



tactics with *camions* and automobiles. A telegram could bring hundreds together in a few hours. All carried large sticks, many wore revolvers, a few even rifles and steel helmets and hand grenades. In the country they usually worked at night; elsewhere they descended upon the towns in broad daylight with a terrible rattle of revolvers fired in the air and their fateful cry, "A-yah, a-yah, ah lah làh!"

*Fascism* was a spontaneous outbreak, not a regular movement. Few of its adherents were aware of or had accepted its theoretical program. Even in practice it varied greatly from place to place.

In Istria and Venetia Julia *fasci* destroyed the various Chambers of Labor, the coöperative seats, the popular libraries, and (at Trieste) the *Lavoratore* newspaper and the Slav *Hotel Balkan*.

In the Po valley the *fascisti* worked in the name of the agrarians and uprooted the red agricultural leagues. Village after village was attacked and terrified, the labor leaders beaten, tortured, murdered. Around Ferrara all the leagues were compelled to adhere to the *fascio*. All the men whom proletarian dictatorship had disgusted, officers, sons of land owners, victims of former boycotts and fines, adhered joyously; the others were "persuaded."

The following is a description by a socialist of the tactics employed in the Province of Rovigo:

"They appear before a little house and the order is heard. 'Surround the building.' They are twenty to a hundred persons armed with rifles and revolvers. They call the *capolega*<sup>2</sup> and order him to

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter XI.



come down. If he does not descend they say, 'If you don't we'll burn your house, your wife, your children.' The *capolega* comes down. If he opens the door they seize and tie him, carry him away on a *camion*, subject him to indescribable torture, pretending to kill or drown him; and then abandon him in the open country, naked, tied to a tree.

"If he is a brave man and does not open the door and defends himself with arms, then it is immediate assassination . . . in the heart of the night, a hundred against one."

Thus the *fascio* of Ferrara captured the red leagues and held them under a reign of terror.

As the movement spread, the methods were enlarged to include riot and provocation, kidnaping and the searching of private citizens. Where the socialists offered no pretext and the owners paid, the *fascisti* themselves picked the quarrel: Socialism in Italy must disappear. In the "mild" Province of Rovigo alone, in a short time four to five thousand socialists were violently handled and three hundred houses burned. In much of North Italy the socialist press was destroyed by fire.

*Fascism* in Central Italy was essentially a social and intellectual rebellion of the aristocracy and capitalist classes against labor prosperity and rowdy conduct. In the words of a Florentine sympathizer, "If a district is incurably bad [*read*, independent, or unruly] the *fascisti* intervene . . . and assume control. Then in its turn the Government intervenes." Old local feuds emerged and communal rivalry. The citizens of Perugia watched all night on the city walls to welcome the *fascisti* of

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Perugia back from the sack of the labor organizations at Terni. Imagine the joy of a true Florentine in helping to destroy the Chamber of Labor of Siena! Or the atavistic pleasure of the Florentine burghers at the attack on the laborers and roughs of the San Frediano quarter, with its violence and bloodshed. Italy seemed to have retrograded six hundred years.

In Rome *fascism* meant little but Adriatic bombast, an assault on the baggage of a regularly invited bolshevik commercial mission, an attempt to check profiteering, the searching of a few peaceful citizens, the closing of shops by force on the occasions of *fascisti* defeats and a rowdy national congress.

One night (March 29, 1921) eight *fascisti* armed with rifles and helmets boarded the express train at Terontola and examined one by one the personal papers of all the passengers, including those who were asleep in their berths. The police looked on indulgently. . . .

In the South *fascism* failed miserably except where backed by the Government for its own purposes. In Sicily the *fascisti* were merely a new edition in a patriotic cover of the venerable *mafia*.

Everywhere the *fasci* were financed by business men, land owners, patriots, all those with an interest in cheap labor or a score to settle with the socialists. In parts of Tuscany each rich man pledged himself to "pay a subsidy proportionate to the aid he asks."

The land owners frankly avowed that their enemy was socialist propaganda in any form and their aim to reduce the pay of the farm hands. Where the *fasci* flourished the owners broke the old contracts

and in some places refused the recognized principle of collective bargaining. Naturally therefore we find the period of *fascisti* ascendancy in the country coinciding with the erection (by royal decree and without Parliamentary discussion) of a new tariff barrier higher than the old, with the attempted formation of a conservative agrarian political party, with a general period of industrial crisis and unemployment. "The action of the *fasci*," said Filippo Turati, "corresponded to the need of certain parasite industrial and agrarian owners to throw upon the nation and the workers the consequences and burdens of the war and their fear of the workers' legitimate resistance, and the necessity of making a clean sweep of their conquests and fortresses."<sup>3</sup>

Italy had been united by the action of an energetic and unofficial minority; the tradition served to justify the unauthorized action both of D'Annunzio and of the *fasci*. Moreover, the Italian middle class, with no real tradition or understanding of popular government, was already homesick for the easy period of the war, when with liberty suppressed, criticism abolished, and law promulgated by royal decree, administration had been a simple and highly profitable affair.

Never did the inherent weakness of the Italian state—the terrible absence of patriotic understanding—appear more blatantly than during the dictatorship of the *fasci*. Enough to say that the State organs, Army, police, magistracy and functionaries took the side of a wild faction whose

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<sup>3</sup> Speech in the Chamber of Deputies, July 22, 1921.

methods were at best illegal, at worst abhorrently barbarous. To be sure, the state employees had for years been butts of derision on the part of the communists; the police and army had been the victim of much violence and scorn. It was natural that having found allies in the *fascisti*, who praised their work, they should discriminate between *fascist* and communist illegality in favor of the former. But precisely because this discrimination was natural, it merited severe repression. The illegal favoritism of many public servants, from the Prime Minister down, was disgraceful.

From the Army the *fascisti* received sympathy, assistance and war material. Officers in uniform took part in its punitive expeditions. The *fascisti* were allowed to turn national barracks into their private arsenals. The facts are proven. Thus the Army revenged itself on the anti-patriots.

In the presence of murder, violence and arson, the police remained "neutral." With their full knowledge and consent these bands scurried along the white roads in their *camions*, bent on assault, and armed to the teeth. The police captains refused to heed warnings of intended excursions and where they could not refuse a summons to defend unarmed workmen and peasants, deliberately arrived too late. When armed bands compelled the socialists to resign from office under pain of death, or regularly tried and condemned their enemies to blows, banishment or execution, the functionaries merely shrugged their shoulders, or like the Prefect of Reggio Emilia, answered, "That's the way the wind is blowing." Sometimes carbineers and royal guards openly made

common cause with the *fascisti*, and paralyzed the resistance of the peasants. Against the *fascisti* alone, the latter might have held their own. Against *fascisti* and police together, they were helpless and their complaints merely caused the authorities to arrest . . . them, as guilty of attempting to defend themselves. Socialists were condemned for alleged crimes committed months, years, before. *Fascisti* taken red-handed were released for want of evidence! When they thought it necessary the *fascisti* telegraphed friendly advice to the Prefects.

"In Italy," remarks the genial Prezzolini, "the Government does not command. . . . No one commands but all impose themselves."<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Giolitti with that genius for the devious path and the *camorra* which has made him great among his countrymen, was already planning to use the *fascisti* for his own purposes in the coming election.

## PREPARING THE ELECTIONS

The administrative methods perfected by Giovanni Giolitti and applied by him with the most exquisite opportunism, rely upon the all but universally verified assumption of human frailty. They can be summed up in three maxims:

1. Every man has either something to obtain or something to conceal.
2. No personal service should go unrewarded, no hurt unpunished.
3. The people can be either hoodwinked, or bluffed, or bullied.

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<sup>4</sup> *Codice della Vita Italiana.*



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Such a noble conception does not however aim exclusively at satisfying the ambition of the Boss and his friends. Giolitti has ideals. . . . He desires the gradual awakening of Italian national consciousness and the absorption of the various revolutionary forces by the liberal Italian monarchy under the Piedmontese House of Savoy. For fifteen years he has favored the working class in order to tame the socialists. The war which exiled him from power enabled them to get ahead of him. The socialists became a true people's party. The old methods—candy and spankings—no longer disciplined the adolescent. So nothing remained but to draw the leaders into political collaboration with the middle class and having caged them in the Ministries, draw the strings from their tails. But so long as the socialists remained so numerous they would be dangerous to the Giolitti ideal. A general election was first necessary to reduce their numbers. Accordingly, with that cynical independence which characterizes his wilder moods, the Prime Minister dissolved the Chamber (April 8, 1921), under pretext that a working majority could not be obtained. For the new elections (May 15) he united the "constitutional" parties and secured an alliance with the *fascisti*, hoping at the same time to exclude the latter from office through the preferential vote which the proportional representation in use permits. His political lieutenants, with all the weapons of the police and the bureaucracy at their disposal, joined the *fascisti* in preparing the elections.

The Prime Minister's ideal in such cases can be imagined from the following statistics (the period



## IMMORTAL ITALY

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covered is January 1, 1921—May 31, 1921):

Chambers of Labor burned, sacked or damaged .....	120
Labor Headquarters, Leagues, Coöper- atives, clubs, town halls, etc., burned, destroyed or damaged....	243
Killed by the <i>fasci</i> .....	202
Wounded by the <i>fasci</i> .....	1144
Killed by the police or the Army.....	44
Wounded by the police or the Army...	4258
Arrests made of workers, socialists or communists .....	2240
Arrests made of <i>fascisti</i> or government agents .....	102 <sup>5</sup>

From such meticulous preparations, the Prime Minister and his henchmen expected the legitimate triumph of the Parties of Progress, Order and Constitutional Liberty.

### ELECTION BY CLUBBERS

In certain neglected regions of the South, Giovanni Giolitti had in previous elections achieved merited success by the organization for electoral purposes of gangs armed with enormous sticks, who under the paternal eye of Police and Prefect (without

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<sup>5</sup> The figures are those of the socialists, *Avanti!* (June 16, 1921) but their probable accuracy is attested by other sources. The London *Nation* states that during the first 17 days of electoral campaigning in Italy (April 5–21) 60 persons were shot, 34 beaten with clubs, 49 assassinated (43 socialists and 6 *fascisti*), 40 houses invaded and sacked (38 socialist and 2 *fascist*), 7 buildings burned, 212 socialists and 2 *fascisti* arrested, and 11 protest strikes declared.

The official Vatican *Osservatore Romano* states (May 18, 1921) that the number of victims on election day (on which side we can imagine!) were 40 dead and 70 wounded.

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violating the law against the carrying of real weapons) secured the triumph of the Government candidates by the ingenious device of preventing the opponents from voting. In 1921 the same system was applied to most of Italy.

In large sections of Romagna, Emilia, Tuscany, Umbria and the Puglie the united *fascisti* and carabinieri drove the socialists from the polling places, snatched and destroyed their ballots, or lined them up and "instructed" them while they voted. Thus in Istria, where intimidation was used, outside the town of Pola only twenty per cent voted at all, and an unquestioned Slavic majority "elected" one Slav and three Italian patriots of the *fascio*. In one Sicilian town the number of voters is said to have surpassed the total number of registered electors; in another locality the Under Prefect captained the *mafia* to victory. Rural Tuscany and Umbria found voting as exciting as war. Even the Clerical Populars shared in the persecution; a "month of violence" preluded a "day of terror." At Perugia the electoral secret was violated. At Castiglione del Lago the peasants were marched to the polling places and obliged to vote. Among the governmental candidates elected were an Under Secretary of State and the Prime Minister's faithful doctor, Agostino Mattoli! At Pinerolo in Piedmont documentary evidence was produced by the socialists to show that an ex-minister, Luigi Facta, promised a pound of soap from a friendly factory to each supporter in case he be elected at the head of the list!

Such methods promised sure success; yet they

failed. Proportional representation proved, except in cases of actual violence, corruption proof. The real hold of the socialists on the masses was demonstrated by the fact that the number of their deputies (plus the communists) was reduced by less than twenty and in another atmosphere would hardly have been diminished at all. The Clerical Populars, reputed almost as dangerous to the established order as the socialists, actually gained. The *fascisti* almost everywhere surpassed the government candidates in number of votes and elected forty-five deputies, who entered the Chamber full of fight. As a reaction against the reds and the clericals, the election failed. Temporarily it gave over the country to the *fascisti*, who considered themselves the party of the future and the real masters of the situation. Theirs was a delusion of short duration. Public opinion, disgusted by their lawlessness and tyranny, had shifted against them.

## THE MIDDLE CLASS CLAMORS FOR LAW AND ORDER

The results of the election caused Guglielmo Ferrero to write wisely that the "burning of the Chambers of Labor, the Coöperatives, and the labor headquarters" had "balanced in the public mind all the errors and foolishness committed by the socialists after the elections of 1919."

The *fascisti* remained blithely unaware of the change. Their leader Mussolini had predicted that the political power would soon pass from the hands of Giovanni Giolitti to those of Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Immediately after the election he announced that

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the *fascisti*, being "republican in tendency," would not be present at the opening of the new session, at which the king is always present. The nationalists and conservatives in the *fascist* ranks were horrified and threatened a schism.

Throughout Italy the *fasci* had grown extravagantly. They now claimed a thousand *fasci* with almost two hundred thousand adherents. A *fascio* had even been organized among the Italians of the United States. The leaders, however, tended steadily away from their capitalist employers toward their revolutionary doctrinal basis. They still protected the land owners but now claimed their subsidy as a right and blackmailed those who refused it.

After a successful attempt to banish from the Chamber of Deputies the communist Misiano, reputed a deserter, their exuberance knew no bounds. They could no longer be satisfied with anything less than entire rule. Punitive expeditions on an immense scale were organized against those localities which still dared oppose or criticize the *fasci*. Grosseto in Tuscany and the small village of Roccastrada were captured amid unheard of violence. But the culmination was the attack on the large town of Treviso in Venetia. The republicans and clericals of Treviso were guilty of having defended the farm laborers of a near-by village (Ca' Tron) against two tyrannical cultivators and had criticized the *fascisti*. Such an act of *lèse fascism*, could not go unpunished.

Fifteen hundred men, brought together from districts as remote as Tuscany and Trieste, armed

with rifles, hand grenades, machine guns and steel helmets part of which had been supplied by the regular troops, arrived before Treviso late one evening (July 12, 1921) in a hundred *camions* preceded by a white motor car. Under cover of darkness they surrounded the walled town and penetrated into the streets. Their plan was complete, their enemy "whoever isn't a *fascista*." First they broke into and sacked the offices of the clerical newspaper, *Il Piave*, and then those of the republican *Riscossa*, where a few defenders were overcome after some hours of siege. Dawn found the *fascisti* masters of the town, for the police and soldiers had assumed an attitude of "benevolent neutrality." So for a few hours the *fascisti* tyrannized the place, sacking a few shops and houses, and then withdrew, highly satisfied with themselves.

The attack on Treviso recalled the Italian middle class to their senses; the country was shocked: many *fascisti* protested. The catholic peasants of the country around Treviso would have murdered every *fascista* in the district if they had not been held in by the leaders. Such an act of unprovoked violence was extreme, unwonted, said the respectable citizens. The *fascisti* had gone outside their real zone, etc. Men's opinions changed over night. In a single day the newspapers ceased to praise and began to speak of excesses.

Giovanni Giolitti, scenting danger, took the first opportunity to resign. A lie by the Foreign Secretary about Port Baross of Fiume, had enraged the nationalists and reaction by the *fascisti* had brought the country to the verge of civil war.



### THE PEOPLE DEFEND THEMSELVES

The Italian common people are ignorant, long suffering and easily bullied, but they are not cowards. After the first surprise they would have held their own against the *fascisti* had not the latter been aided by the police. It was only against the carbineers and royal guards that they proved, once they awakened to the situation, entirely helpless. Then they began to use the universal weapon of the hopelessly oppressed, assassination. Policemen and *fascisti* in considerable numbers were stabbed by night on lonely roads or picked off by day with a rifle from a hidden clump of trees. If discovered the assassins took to the mountains where, assisted by an entirely friendly population, they revived the all but extinct tradition of brigandage. Only after it became clear that they had absolutely nothing to hope from the government, and Giolitti resigned to hide his failure to curb the *fasci*, the people began to band together in self-defense. In the countryside peasant war veterans began to challenge the night riders; certain catholics, who took the name of *God's Arditi*, distinguished themselves by the ferociousness of their counter attacks. In the cities the nucleus of the new irregular army was drawn from a group of *ex-arditi* (storm troops) and organized under the name of *Arditi of the People*.

Their founder, an ex-officer named Argo Secondari, took the right tack from the first. The *Arditi of the People* were organized in the full light of day with considerable newspaper publicity, and recruited from republicans, socialists, communists and



anarchists. The first funds were supposedly subscribed by a secret republican organization. Many clericals, though abstaining from participation, were sympathetic. In a week after their organization the first *Arditi of the People* were patrolling the streets of Rome by night and imitating the *fascisti* by stopping, searching and threatening their enemies. But as far as possible their action was restricted to a threat.

The effect of this organization on the Italian middle class was magical. For fifty years this class had bullied, cheated and abused the common people and naturally feared nothing in the world so much as a *jacquerie* or peasant uprising, because they knew it would be justified. With such a movement Italy seemed threatened. Even the revolutionary members of the *fasci* were horrified to find the common people taking arms against them. The *fasci* claimed to have liberated the workers from red tyrants and to have sought to stop profiteering. Yet instead of gratitude they received only cordial and general hatred.

The attempt of a large number of them to storm the town of Viterbo failed miserably. The citizens armed themselves, blocked the gates with barbed wire and manned the walls; while their women prepared kettles of boiling water to pour on the assailants. Only the forethought of the police prevented the train load of *fascisti* from being torn to pieces. By mistake the defenders fired on an automobile containing English tourists and killed a child.

The new Prime Minister, Ivanoe Bonomi, had

## THE REACTION THAT FAILED

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taken office with a promise to enforce the law. The police received orders to this effect. For *fascism* was rapidly rendering the country unsafe for foreigners as well as for Italians. The killing of the English child came on top of the arrest and trial at Florence of a family of innocent American tourists amid the most open intimidation by the local *fascio*. A Frenchman in the same town was set upon and beaten because the *fascisti* mistook the *Légion d'Honneur* ribbon in his lapel for a communist emblem. Naturally the Foreign Governments protested.

Finally the police did their duty. The carbineers resisted the attempt of a large body of bandsmen to storm the town of Sarzana in the Carrara district (July 31, 1921). As the *fascisti* retreated in disorder before the fire of the police, the population, a rough crowd of stone cutters and reënforced by a battalion of *Arditi of the People*, fell upon them and massacred all whom they could lay hands on. *Fascism* had finally become dangerous even when practiced *en masse*.

From all classes and districts appeals were lifted heavenward for peace.

A fitting culmination to all the absurd and aimless violence since the armistice was now found. On August 2, 1921, Victor Emmanuel III reigning in the Kingdom of Italy, accredited representatives of the two sovereign factions, the Socialists and the *Fasci*, under the august influence of the President of a lesser third faction, the Chamber of Deputies, met at Rome and signed a solemn Treaty of Peace whereby each agreed henceforth to respect the law

of the land. The mental state of the country can be judged by the fact that this was considered a great triumph for the new Prime Minister.

A few days later when the Government had finally decided that existing law (when enforced) was sufficient to guarantee order, Prime Minister Bonomi issued a long circular to the Prefects declaring that various crimes and misdemeanors should no longer be tolerated.

Officially, the *fascist* reaction was over.

### THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Immediate peace could hardly be expected. "Minds were too excited," as the Italians say; anyway it was fanciful to imagine that any agreement could be immediately and scrupulously respected in Italy. The communists ignored the peace and continued to incite to class war. The reactionary *fasci* in Tuscany and Emilia had agreements with the rich men and land owners not to permit the return of the banished socialist organizers. But when they openly refused to accept the peace signed by the best of their leaders, the latter hotly resigned and with them went the real strength of the organization. Benito Mussolini defended his resignation by declaring (August 10, 1921) that "*fascism* is no longer liberation but tyranny, no longer the safeguard of the nation but the defense of private interests. . . ." Everybody knew this, but it was comforting to have it confessed by the angry leader.

To be sure, the *fascisti* for many months continued to carry out deeds of violence; *Arditi of the People* were heard of here and there; many func-

tionaries protected the one and attacked the other. Many villages continued under a sovereign local government, like Castiglione in Teverina, where a certain Count Vannicelli, a *fascista*, passed sentence of death on political offenders, or Pisoniano, also near Rome, which remained a stronghold of communists who considered private property through the eyes of Lenin. But, on the whole, Italy settled down to a condition of normal anarchy. Statescraft has ceased to be anything but the equilibrium of disruptive forces. The Italian government acts like a fat, indignant old lady amid a crowd of her unruly sons. Since she cannot make them behave she is forced to set them one against the other. It protects her tranquillity at the expense of prestige.

Several of the wild shoots of Italian socialism undoubtedly deserved amputation and the *fasces* served their country by severing them from the main trunk. But socialism is only the stronger for this severing of connection with foreign communism, and better able to maintain itself in the tempest of business crisis and unemployment. It is less political and more economic. Without the shadow of a doubt the socialists are stronger to-day than ever before and should they decide to become a reasonably patriotic party and accept the responsibility of governing, their immediate future seems secure. To-day their economic interests force them to work for pacification.

Thus weariness and economic pressure, which would make for readjustment, are still in conflict with revolutionary nationalism and widespread

## IMMORTAL ITALY

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middle class discontent, which push toward upheaval. Between the two, Italian reconstruction and pacification are largely postponed. Though it would seem that the conservative forces must win out, sporadic violence or attempted revolution is still possible. Certain Italians themselves, with their selfish lack of discipline, still stand between their country and the brilliant future to which the sober industry and the intelligence of the masses entitle her.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRESENT PROBLEMS AND THE NEW GENERATION

The true strength of rulers and empires lies not in armies and emotions, but in the belief of men that they are inflexibly open and truthful and legal. As soon as a government departs from that standard it ceases to be anything more than the "gang in possession" and its days are numbered.<sup>1</sup>

This generic statement of the problem of government may be applied with peculiar aptitude to Italy. While in one sense the general tradition of bad government—factions in the North and Center, absolutism in the South—was merely prolonged, matters had never before gone so far. Since the armistice the "gang in possession" has patently adopted means and modes neither inflexibly open, nor truthful nor legal, and the State in consequence has become increasingly feeble.

A futile duplicity has too frequently inspired the conduct of the politicians. Many of the really praiseworthy acts and attitudes of personified Italy have frequently been soiled by some accompanying impurity of subterfuge or motive; as when a colonel intrigued in favor of the separatist movement in Croatia while his government was negotiating for a treaty and durable friendship with the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; or when a Minister of Foreign Affairs mendaciously denied to Par-

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<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wells, *An Outline of History*.



liament and press having promised Port Baross of Fiume to the same country. That the scarce profits of such methods have not caused them to be discarded is itself proof palpable that the elder statesmen are beyond educating. During the occupation of Valona the Italians spent millions of *lire* in trying to buy the friendship of influential Albanians, who philosophically accepted the cash and remained as cheerfully hostile as before. Despite great expenditure of energy and money Italy had staggered from one partial setback to another, unable to desert the policy of "empty hands but dirty." The country has enjoyed neither the spoils of brigandage nor the tranquil conscience of the just.

To put it bluntly, anarchy and personal ambition have taken nearly every possible opportunity to play havoc with the national life. Beneath the ineptitude of the older men there was anarchy at least as great as in the violent outbreaks of the young. If the latter caused the country to spin endlessly around the Fiume will-o'-the-wisp, while other governments followed the steady golden torches of territories and concessions, if they brought the country almost to taste of unripe labor insurrection and then followed incipient indigestion with the over violent physic of *fascism*, they were but following the example of their elders. Anarchy in the upper grades of the army (the rivalry between General Cadorna and General Capello) had contributed largely to the disaster at Caporetto. Anarchy in the Peace Delegation helped to make the Italian showing at Paris so comically tragic. Anarchy in all quarters still keeps the

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Chamber of Deputies from accomplishing its purpose and so almost forces one Cabinet after another to govern by the doubtful expedient of decree laws. Italy suffers not from lack of intelligence but from lack of discipline, self-control and self-sacrifice. Government, according to a noted Italian journalist, is a question of expediency not of principle.

The D'Annunzians and *fascisti* and communists manifestly outdid their elders, to be sure. It is due to their renovating influence that events of an acceptedly historical nature have for the most part been submerged in a sea of discord, which resulted from the opposition between the attempts of the older men to "return to normal" and the determination of the new spirit to transform the old conditions. A brief account of Italian life since the armistice must therefore, if it attempt to be quint-essential, stress the psychological and social movements at the expense of mere happenings, all of which partake of the provisional. The armistice found Italy almost exhausted. Allied hostility and the internal struggle have retarded reconstruction both within and without.

Internally we find absence of plan the chief characteristic. Great reforms have been promised, but as regularly pigeonholed or undone when half realized. Legislative attempts toward social democracy have been thwarted in their application, reactionary thrusts parried by popular opposition. Financial progress has stumbled over graft, timidity and inertia. The taxes are unbearably heavy, yet extravagance continues. The most reliable production is that of paper money and the paper *lira* con-

tinues to impress one with its scarce gold value and buying power. The national debt snowballs down the hill of prodigality and those who cry out harshly against the frenzied finance implied in an annual deficit of several billions meet only silence or cynicism or helplessness.<sup>2</sup> As in the rest of victorious Europe, a public fed for four years on nauseating self-righteousness still believes that the holiness of the late war constitutes a dispensation from footing the bill.

Industry remains lean for all the millions milked from the Sacred Cow of State. Exportation is woefully small, production deficient and spasmodic. Yet people find time to brag and brawl and the national consumption has never been so large. Foreigners, from design or conviction, are skeptical of Italian business solidity. The theoretically excellent scheme made to American exporters by an Italian ambassador, that Italy should become the finishing plant and clearing house for American commercial expansion in the Mediterranean Basin, meets a cold reception because of lack of faith in Italy. The Germans are hard at work trying to reconquer their former commercial pre-eminence and the home industries, despite their large tariff protection, are squealing. Public improvements stagnate for lack of funds.

Economic dependence, however, has seconded internal upheaval in obtaining one very valuable result. Italian diplomacy has dealt generously with

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<sup>2</sup> A plausible description of Italy's financial condition may be found in a speech of Deputy Matteotti in the Chamber of Deputies, July 21, 1921.

prostrate enemies and striven for European reconciliation and reconstruction. The Italians have everywhere sought to let bygones be bygones and smooth over differences. Unfortunately they are weak; in a clash with the consistently unforgiving policy of France, Italy has had to submit or gain her ends by sheer plausibility. Her inability to send large bodies of soldiers abroad has tied her hands, though where such forces have gone, as in Silesia, they have behaved admirably.

To internal dissension the world also owes the evacuation of Valona by Italian troops and the probable recognition by the Powers of Albanian independence. By signing the generous Pact of Tirana with the insurgent Albanians, Italy gave an example of decent dealings and at the same time inaugurated a friendship which only unusual foolishness on the part of Italian or Albanian politicians or deliberate mischief making by the other Powers can keep from developing into a mutually beneficent political understanding.

Italian foreign policy tries to favor neither her allies nor her ex-enemies too much, frustrating as far as possible the aims of France in Central Europe and of Britain (under Greek letter labels) in the near East. Sooner or later she may reluctantly take sides with one of them against the other, but would prefer to see the power of both limited by a really serious international organization such as the League. She would really welcome a close alliance with the United States, yet realizes that save in the contingency, disastrous for the entire world, of war between our country and Great Britain, she

has little to offer us in return for our political or financial aid.

The one unqualified accomplishment of the post armistice period has been the Treaty of Rapallo, which gave the country admirable frontiers somewhat beyond ethnographic justice, and lifting Italy to the "protectorship" of the Little Entente (Roumania, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia) in their determination to prevent a return of the Hapsburgs, is presumed to have settled the Adriatic question.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to believe in the permanency of the solution. As in so many other instances, the cynical logic of the nationalists is more convincing here than the pious platitudes of the idealists. Modern nations exist as sentimental, economic and military units, dangerous only because organized on a basis of unlimited selfishness—"egoism proud of itself"—<sup>3</sup> and irresponsible greed.

The chief ports of the Northern Adriatic are largely inhabited by Italians, extremely jealous of their historic memories and their superior cultural tradition. Behind them stand nearly 40,000,000 other Italians. Into Trieste, Fiume, Zara, where the Italian majority is unquestioned, Italy will try to prevent dangerous foreign immigration, while she defends the influence of her minorities in the towns now attributed to the Slavs.

Italy will never moreover cease planning and struggling to obtain possession of the Slavic islands and East coast of the Adriatic so long as naval strategy takes stock of topography. It is a matter of self-defense.

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase is of G. Lewis Dickinson.



But there are other factors. The virile Yugoslavs with their high birth rate and naïve enjoyment of warfare will press with ever growing mass against the Italian coast towns and will flow provokingly forward across the new frontier into lands now recognized as Italian.

Third claimant, and potentially more formidable than either, Germany will watch from the North with greedy defiant eyes. As she grows stronger she will again adopt the Bismarckian theory of "pressure toward the East," and will try to compensate her losses on the oceans by commercial expansion in Central Europe, Russia and the Balkans. Having absorbed German Austria, she will seek relentlessly to thrust a fist between the Italians and Yugoslavs until her itching fingers close over Trieste. Why not? Economy is on her side. Why should a few hundred thousand Italians in a medium-sized city cut off Central Europe from its southern port?

Even Hungary, small yet vigorous, will not give up hope of recovering at least part of what was stripped from her, and chiefly her old port Fiume and the freedom of her sea-bound traffic.

Inevitable conflicts between equally legitimate sentimental, strategic and economic interests thus constitute the Adriatic question. Any arrangement which fails to satisfy all of them is no solution. Ideally there is no reason for conflict, no reason why Italians at Trieste and Fiume should not serve the economic needs of Germans, Majars and Slavs in a totally satisfactory manner. Experience teaches, however, that modern governments can not rise to so serenely intelligent an arrangement. The ob-



stacle does not lie in any fatal incompatibility of national temperament, as the nationalists would teach us, but in the structure of the modern nation. So long as each nation remains in practice the means for the economic advancement of interested commercial groups, financial gamblers, ambitious generals, and a law unto itself, it will not abide by the "natural political map." The solution of the Adriatic question, as of most of the other political problems now rendering much of Europe miserable, lies in the abolition of economic frontiers, with the corresponding reduction of nationality to a factor of no economic importance. This result cannot be reached by a single Treaty, however admirable. Yet the treaty of Rapallo remains the greatest accomplishment of Italian statesmanship in three years.

Beneath her seeming immobility, Italy has undergone a very remarkable transformation. Outwardly the old crew of octogenarians, empty headed orators and unscrupulous turncoats still visibly clutter the seats of the mighty. Under their guiding hands administration becomes each day more complicated and economic organization more unsound. But internally, in the chamber of the national soul where the future is maturing, something has changed. The pulse of the nation, aroused during the war, beats more quickly and powerfully. Italy has undergone a kind of conversion and many of the beneficial effects desired by the interventionists of 1915 are in process of realization. Conversion is first of the soul; the new spirit has not yet had time to emerge in action, but foreigners will do well to take

stock of it. In the dark night after Caporetto, Italy came of age. The typical figures are no longer (if they ever were!) the street musician and the handsome indigent count seeking to win the heart of an heiress. The time when anything foreign swam in a halo of superiority has also vanished. Despite many appearances the real foundations of national life are much more solid than before the war.

Though the Government is nearly bankrupt, the majority of the people are fairly well off. And—chiefly the peasants, who form the majority of the population. Families who formerly consumed the bare pittance necessary to live, whose every moment was a terrible struggle with grinding poverty, profited by their key position as food producers to raise their standard of living to a point compatible with health and decency and self-respect. They began to dress better and see the benefits of some learning and leisure. To maintain their new standard in the fierce competition of the overcrowded country, they will be forced to demand from the State sufficient means of education and themselves to improve their agricultural methods. Their number should enable them to dominate the national life. Both Socialists and Clerical Populars are competing for their adherence and backing their claim to possession of the lands on which they work. The day that Italy is governed chiefly in the interest of the enlightened farmers and the related industries, her economic future will be properly cared for. Peasant proprietorship seems (at least here) to be preferable to collective cultivation because

of the additional stimulus it gives to self-respect and the desire to improve oneself.

The economic interests of the farm laborers are really so opposed to those of the industrial workers that the peasants can hardly be on the side of the present Socialist Party, with its tendencies toward Tariff protection and State subsidies.

We have spoken of the privileged position in the national economy conquered by the industrial workers. So far this too has been an unmixed good. There is some danger that in the struggle to maintain their high standard they will form an alliance with the owners of the unnatural industries, which live on the back of the tax payers with a tariff to protect them from reasonable foreign competition. Such industries as ship building and steel making can never prosper in Italy, and should be abandoned or reduced to the minimum needed for national defense. Naturally they employ a good many men who could not at one stroke be dumped into the street; these might be shifted to those refined crafts in which Italians so easily excel. The burden of their weight cannot forever be hidden from the real producers who bear it, and perhaps the day is not far distant when the latter will insist on its gradual removal.<sup>4</sup> The solidarity of the workers in the parasitical industries with their labor comrades may cause them to make sacrifices in the interest of all.

But it will be a long time before either the peasants

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<sup>4</sup> The noisy failure of Giovanni Ansaldo and Co., the largest steel producing corporation, and of the Ansaldo's chief backer, the Banca Italiana di Sconto, has freed the national economy of an unprofitable burden.

or the industrial workers can exercise intelligent supervision of the national life. The immediate hope lies elsewhere—in the fact that the weight of to-day's economic crisis falls quite properly upon the unproductive classes, the intellectuals, and professional men and bureaucrats. They were chiefly responsible for fifty years' failure to develop the national character and the natural resources; for having preferred battleships and armies to schools; parasitical steel industries to proper irrigation, fertilization and "bonification" of the land, monuments to hospitals. They sought "decorous" employment, even when badly paid, rather than honest commerce or productive manual labor. As professional men they swarmed out of all proportion to the national needs, and, when forced by competition to live on their wits, they deliberately complicated and debased the national life. They struggled at all costs to enter the elephantine bureaucracy and receive a salary which, however insufficient, was far superior to the services rendered. But so long as they could live "decorously" they continued to cling like leeches to the Sacred Cow. Now they find themselves worse off than a hired farm hand or manual laborer.

Imagine the reaction of one of them, the son, let us say, of a small-town lawyer deputy who lived on his political reputation and peasant clients, and secured his regular reëlection to Parliament by faithful adherence to the Government *camorra*. The son has grown up in an atmosphere of clerical (or more likely, anti-clerical) bigotry and steeped from infancy in the philosophy of success without labor.

By natural wit and a little study our young man managed to reach Law School. Halfway through, his studies were interrupted by the war. He did not desire to fight, he resented the interruption of his "career," he instinctively identified his country with the Sacred Cow of State which his father and so many others so assiduously milked. Without wishing it, he became an officer of infantry. He commanded a platoon, then a company; he lived with his soldiers in circumstances where men became equal in despair and horror. He came to know them and finally to like them. He learned self-respect and indifference to trifles. Strangest of all, he discovered that he who had scoffed at patriotism, really loved his country—that the old decaying "palace" where he was born and the small mountain town in the friendly hills, meant a great deal to him, something more than his personal ambition, something he expressed in the word *Italia*. He had unconsciously become a friend of common men (hence no reactionary) and a patriot (consequently no bolshevik). Having lived the folly of war he hoped in Wilson and world reform. The Peace Conference upset his hopes. It proved that the world he returned to was almost as destitute of high ideals as the one he had left. The politicians at home confirmed his disillusion; they wished only to rebuild the old. As a final blow he discovered that his education and experience in leadership were accounted of scarce economic value. He returned from the war weary, yet proud of his effort and quite expecting to find his services requited by national gratitude and an easy job. He found neither. His



countrymen seemed fiercely anti-patriotic and there were no jobs for men without experience. Though far older than most students he, the retired major, might of course return to Law School and obtain a diploma. What was the use in a world in which the peasant received far more consideration and lived better than the lawyer? He lacked both the capital and the knowledge for farming.

His first reactions were bitter; he blamed the Allies who had destroyed the Italian victory and the socialists who had discredited Italian patriotism. He heartily approved D'Annunzio, only considering that the affair went a little too far. Yet if D'Annunzio had really marched on Rome he would have been among the first to join him, without exactly knowing why. He hated the railroad men who held up the nation at the point of the strike and obtained "fine raiment." What had common laborers done to go well dressed while he, an officer and an educated man, the son of a deputy, sought for a starvation job in broken shoes?

In this mood, *fascism* found him a ready convert. Its doctrines of greater production were sound. There was some satisfaction in beating up a gang of insolent, well dressed mechanics who had never seen a bursting shell. But *fascism* led nowhere. Its noisy violence offered nothing more permanent than the cynical timidity of the old men whom he was coming to detest. To kill a man was easy, to reform him—that was the task! The real trouble with Italy was not socialism. It must rather be an inherent weakness in the national character, content to remain unenterprising and illiterate while other



nations progressed. He began to study men and events closely, to read more and reflect. Little by little he passed in review the organization and problems of modern Italy since her unification. To-day he is reaching certain conclusions. In his way he has become a revolutionary.

For him the old question of Quirinal and Vatican has lost its bitterness and large part of its interest. A restoration of the temporal power of the Popes is out of the question and he would welcome a solution which would protect the spiritual independence and diplomatic convenience of the Supreme Pontiff. Far more than in the Vatican he is interested in the new Clerical Popular Party, which, at the last election, drew the preference of twenty per cent of the entire Italian vote. A revision of the Law of Guarantees in a way satisfactory to the Holy See troubles him far less than the vision of the Pope, master of the entire country through the Popular Party. The former he will concede, the latter combat fiercely.

Events connected with the death of the late Pope Benedict XV have confirmed his fears. A Minister of State, a member of the Popular Party, officially visited the Vatican and expressed his country's grief. Only the fall of the Bonomi Ministry prevented the Chamber of Deputies from devoting an entire sitting to the commemoration of the dead Pontiff—"sovereign" of a "State" still formally "at war" with Italy. The connection between the Vatican and the Popular Party, though formally disavowed, is well-known. And the Popular Party is a link in the catholic White International. During

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the Conclave the influence of the Italian constitutional parties was bent toward the election of an intransigent pope like Pius X. None the less Cardinal Achilles Ratti, Archbishop of Milan, a favorite of the Populars, was elected after some opposition, and, though he took the name of Pius XI, it is thought by some that he is favorable to a renewal of diplomatic relations between Italy and the Holy See.

Even less urgent appears the problem of the monarchy. Few persons in Italy feel any great attachment to the Dynasty and the presence of a monarch is felt to be a historic anachronism. The *fasci* are "republican in tendency," the socialists in intention. At the same time a real king fires the imagination of the peasants, who are supposed to be too ignorant to understand a more abstract ideal, and keeps the highest office out of the reach of personal or factional competition. It is a fair guess that so long as the Italian kings continue to "reign, not to govern," following the path of Victor Emmanuel III, they will, save in the case of an Italian reaction followed by resolutions, or of a pan-European antimonarchical movement, continue to fill the gilded seat of state—and find it extremely uncomfortable.

It is when the young ex-officer scrutinizes the State that he is filled with consternation. Here is something serious and baffling and disastrous. The activities of the Italian government have grown into monstrosity. Having exhausted politics, the bureaucrats have invaded, not social life as in the United States, but economics. There is less freedom of

trade than in the other countries which the war has burdened with disastrously interfering politicians. In Italy, the State, the worst of all possible employers and administrators, is hopelessly inefficient and supremely wasteful. It puts two and sometimes three persons into every available job and, not content, welcomes opportunities to branch out into ever new directions. By simple fiat it would establish a just profit for retailed goods. . . .

The reason for this growth is not far to seek; the State exists not to protect common interests but to place them at the disposal of special groups. "With malice toward none, with charity towards all" . . . who succeed in reaching the Official Ear. To the manufacturer it gives a tariff, to the steel barons subsidies, to the sugar makers sure profits. (When, not many years ago, a millionaire member of the sugar trust died of diabetes, the country considered God had paid the debt man ignored.) The State exempts from taxation coöperative societies (chiefly belonging to the Socialist and Popular parties) and gives large doles to the unemployed. To the great middle class it offers jobs, five hundred thousand of them, without counting the employees of the State railroads. Truly the Sacred Cow is of exceptional dairy value.

Such a milker naturally eats a good deal. The people were always taxed unmercifully, and somehow, by tax and by tariff, the statesmen managed to make both ends meet . . . until the war. Since then expenses have far outstripped returns, though taxes have been laid on everything available. Still the State continues to ramify into countless commis-

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sions and sub-commissions; still salaries to employees increase nor is their number ever really diminished. Many categories of State servants, like the railroad employees, live more abundantly than before the war. The inventors of the printers' art little knew the resources they were to place in the hands of needy governments.

Yet such unparalleled generosity wins little gratitude. From D'Annunzio to the Calabrian peasant, no one loves the government, though all turn to it instinctively for the fulfillment of their every want. Even the bureaucrats forget their easy, useless lives and excessive numbers and hate their employer for their scanty salaries.

Worse, government expansion into extra political realms has complicated legislation to a point where Parliament can no longer cope with it and most of the serious work is done either by the Cabinet alone or with intimate advisers.

Thus the Chamber of Deputies falls into ever greater disrepute. The bureaucrats sabotage such legislation as is finally passed. In at least three large districts, Sardinia, Sicily and Venetia, voices are heard demanding administrative autonomy and the clerical Popular Party is behind the project. It is no secret that discontent in the misgoverned South may some day flare into open rebellion.

The Government treats the nation with incredible lack of respect. Foreign policy has remained a prerogative of the diplomats and the extension of decree laws has taken even financial power from Parliament. The elementary guarantees against governmental tyranny are ignored or nonexistent.

Police power can be used equally for political persecution or electioneering, and public functionaries exceed their authority with impunity.

In the meantime the country faces an economic crisis of unparalleled extension. Italy lacks coal and iron—the indispensable materials of thorough-going industry. Its soil is poor and much of the surface is mountainous. It has a large and ever growing population which will soon reach forty millions. Before the war the surplus largely emigrated; the others could be nourished only because of their low standards. During the war the emigrants returned. And they are now kept from re-emigrating by foreign legislation and world-wide labor crisis. Consumption has increased without corresponding increase of production. For this there are only two solutions: either the welcoming of industrial crisis with a return to a low standard (and possible social upheaval) or the increase of production by the exploitation of existing industry and agriculture on better lines and by the creation of new sources of riches. The government dares not accept the first, it lacks the wisdom and energy for the second.

Yet deputy Turati in a superb parliamentary speech<sup>5</sup> has pointed out specifically how the Italian production might be increased in a dozen places. Lands that suffer from drought could be rendered fruitful by the creation of mountain reservoirs; vast malarial plains purified; lakes and marshes drained. The culture of the vine could be enormously improved, market gardening and fruit raising in-

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<sup>5</sup> In the Chamber of Deputies, July 22, 1921.



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dustrialized with the creation of correlated canning industries near by, and exportation to foreign markets properly organized. Fishing might be brought to the level it has reached in Britain and America. The lack of coal could be largely compensated by the development on a large scale of existing water power. At the same time the functions of the State must naturally be limited, the number of employees greatly reduced. Great results could be obtained within a few years. They depend merely on the energetic employment of common sense and available funds. Such a disposition to improvement could hardly fail to win approval and, if it were needed, the coöperation of American capital. Yet the government dawdles. . . .

The older politicians seem to overlook the problem and the newspapers are full of exhortations to an impossible social peace. It is as though the butterfly were asked to spare the chrysalis or the snake the old skin from which it is emerging. The soul of Italy has grown too big for the old body politic and strives restlessly to break its bonds. Labor crisis and *fascisti* reaction had their origin in the irresistible spirit of the new times. New Italy wants to be better fed and educated and frets against the old fashioned State paternalism. Already Italians are cramped for space.

Here lies the really important task of Italian diplomats. This is to obtain, somewhere, somehow, scarcely populated territories whither the stifled population of Italy may emigrate and breathe. Within twenty years Italy may well number fifty million inhabitants—more than France, on a poorer



territory only half so large; as many as Great Britain, without Britain's wealth or industry; nearly as many as Germany! If arrangement can be made for the unhampered emigration of these multitudes into South and North America, or French North Africa, or the Near East, Italy may be able to continue her historical rôle as mediator—her vast humanism and experience will enable her to precede the more narrowly nationalistic nations in the new ways of international coöperation.<sup>6</sup> If no such outlets can be peaceably acquired, Italy will have no choice but to seek to obtain them by violent means. However she may benefit by the example of the German industrial transformation and learn to provide a living for many millions more than can now find employment, she has not the means to support her growing population. However we may judge her military capacity, fifty million exasperated human beings are more than enough to provoke another general conflagration. If constrained to do so, she will turn to the way of armaments and festering nationalism. Already her jingoes find sufficient pretext in the fact that the strategic points of the Mediterranean—Gibraltar, Malta, Suez, Bizerta and now Constantinople—are in the hands of other, largely non-Mediterranean nations. Equity demands that the other peoples take stock of Italy's need, with an eye to satisfying it. If they refuse, they and not she will be responsible for the result. For compared to the urgency of her population prob-

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<sup>6</sup> By a recently signed Treaty (Oct. 8, 1921), the Italian government has arranged with Brazil for the acquiring of lands in that country by Italian peasants and better types of labor contract. This may ease the pressure at home somewhat.

## PRESENT PROBLEMS

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lem, her other difficulties—raw materials, exchange, the Adriatic—are trifling matters. To-day Italy is all for peace; so was the Germany of a century ago. To-morrow she may be forced by inexorable internal pressure, to choose the ways of violent expansion and brutal egoism.

Something of this is apparent to all unprejudiced observers.

Were the older generation of Italians immortal there would be little hope of betterment. But the young men, the war veterans and their younger brothers, the middle class and the best of the proletariat, are rebels. Discontent seems to be inciting an entire generation to overthrow the older men and their cynical indirect methods. The young are more patriotic, energetic and practical than their elders. If they could, many would emigrate; since they must remain they demand a different world: less finance and more production; less paternalism and more soul. Inevitably the future is theirs.

Already they have something positive to work on. The dangers of European anarchy and eternal dissension are perhaps more fully realized in Italy than elsewhere. The older men have pleaded economic weakness to shrink from taking the initiative along the new ways. Perhaps the new generation will dare.

Within the country, capital and labor seem at last to be discovering better ways of industrial co-operation and realizing that, for the time being at least, their interests are identical. The under-

standing between the two, however predatory in intention, will give a much needed respite to the overstrained inhabitants and may be counterbalanced by organization of the farmers. The land reforms—the growth of peasant proprietorship and political awakening—promise great things for the future, things that belie the cold superficial facts of present anarchy.

Sooner or later this country, with its wholly admirable sense of civilization, its brilliant flowering of individual genius, its wide tolerance and humanity, will inevitably take a great part in the evolution of world culture and politics. There is unfortunately the danger that the immediate future, like the immediate past, will be emptied of content by the fatal preference for rhetoric, futile passion and violence. If the older politicians lacked vigor and imagination, the younger men most in evidence seem oriented towards noisy nationalism and the worship of the big stick. The danger of the spiritual revolution degenerating into mere violence is always great. For fifteen hundred years the Italians have been wrangling over a meatless bone. Yet however odious the new qualities may be, (witness the methods of *fascism*!) they are nationally superior to the senile cunning and timidity of the older men. Violence may well be preferable to subtle corruption and a first step toward honest readjustment. Education is the real, the only cure; an excellent sign is that the young men read more than their elders, and act more. Perhaps they will learn to talk less. Certainly the war must have taught the value of culture and the fatuity of pretense.

Somehow, in some manner, imperceptibly yet surely, something new is maturing. Despite lapses into childishness, Italy has come of age.

Meanwhile the danger of armed outbreak has not entirely passed. Were hatred of militarism less deep, or were there a single Italian general with the popular following of Foch or Hindenburg, it is very possible that the young men would before now have undertaken a military *coup d'état*. The requisite discontent exists, the economic situation lends itself. Yet it appears that no such movement will be attempted.

Bad government has partially discredited democracy but there is no room for social or political reaction in Italy. Conservative efforts to arouse the panic of the middle class against this or that supposed danger have had contrary results, or have not developed beyond momentary hysteria. In its reactionary moments the Italian Government is somehow unnatural and comic. Either it expels Sixtus of Bourbon in his absence and arouses the world's laughter; or it expels poor Count Karolyi of Hungary for implication in a bolshevik plot later proven to be nonexistent; or it invites a bolshevik commercial mission to Rome under promises of diplomatic consideration and when the *fascisti* force it to violate its promises and open the Russian's baggage, makes secret apology for its helplessness through the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Decidedly the helmet of reaction is unbecoming to *Italia*.

To-day Italy remains, despite the *fascisti*, almost the only country where liberty and opinion are re-

## IMMORTAL ITALY

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spected, where it is permitted to dissent from current opinion and, within limits, from current behavior. If the country remains true to its innate liberalism, it may come to take the place, once so proudly held and now so tragically abandoned by the United States, Britain and Switzerland, as a refuge for the persecuted and the dissenting, a shelter for the outcasts of to-day who blaze the trail for to-morrow.

Given only discipline, discipline, discipline and wise tolerance, the young Italians may bring their sober common sense to the rescue of battered, dismayed and brooding Europe.

Through acquaintance with the younger generation, the generation that held the Piave while their elders quailed, I have faith in Italy.

FINIS

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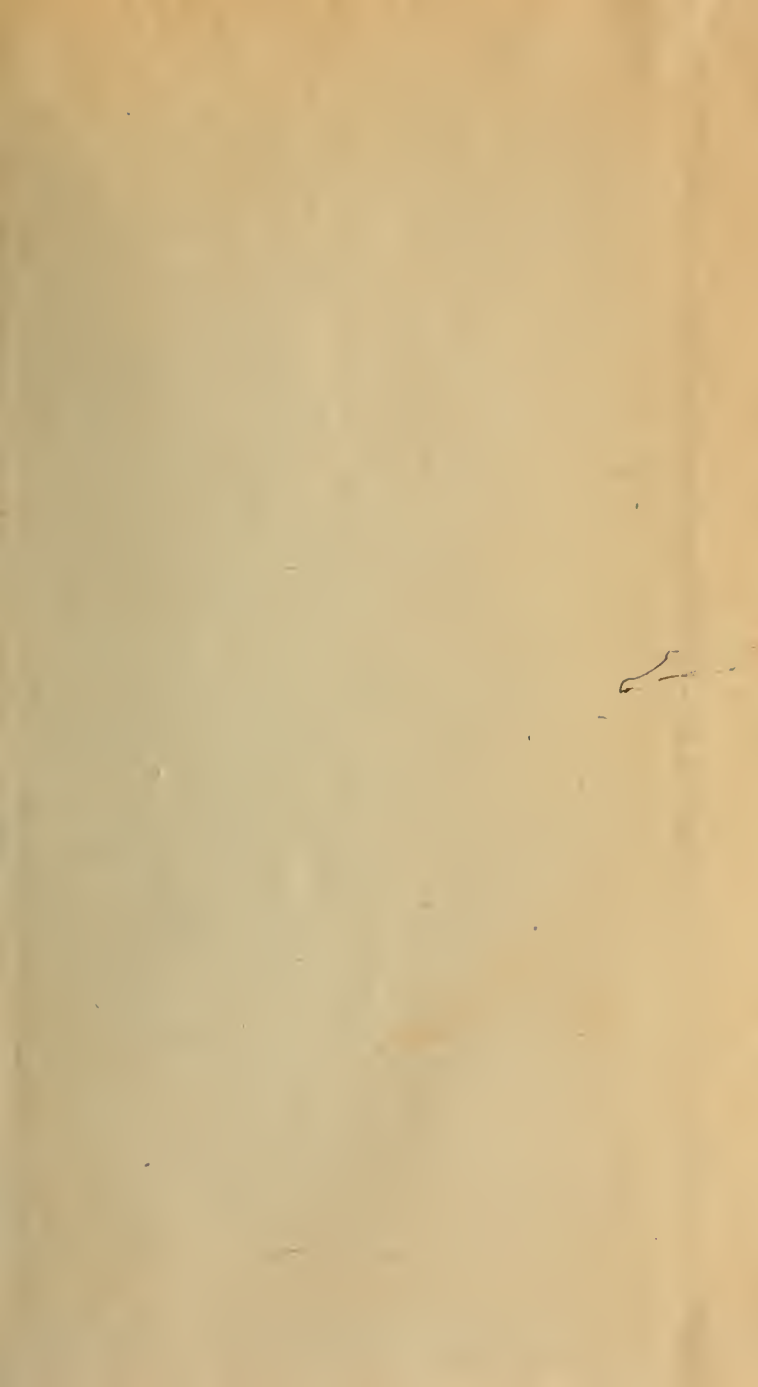
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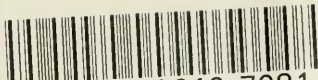






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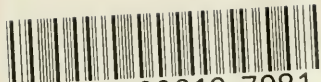
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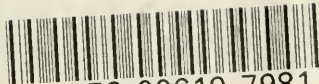
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